GEORGINA OF THE RAINBOWS

ANNIE FELLOWS JOHNSTON

"Georgina"

Of The Rainbows

GEORGINA
OF THE RAINBOWS

BY

ANNIE FELLOWS JOHNSTON

AUTHOR OF
TWO LITTLE KNIGHTS OF KENTUCKY,
THE GIANT SCISSORS,
THE DESERT OF WAITING, ETC.

" . . . Still bear up and steer right onward." MILTON

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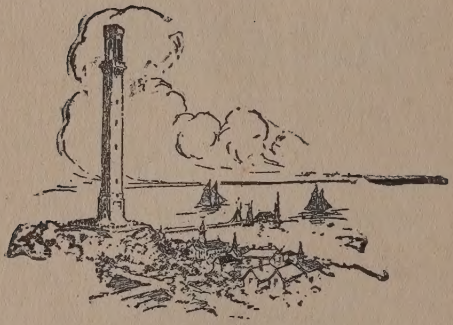
To
My Little God-daughter
"ANNE ELIZABETH"



"At the Tip of Old Cape Cod."

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"As Long as a Man Keeps Hope
at the Prow He Keeps Afloat."

"Put a Rainbow 'Round Your Troubles."—GEORGINA.

Georgina of the Rainbows

CHAPTER I

HER EARLIER MEMORIES

IF old Jeremy Clapp had not sneezed his teeth into the fire that winter day this story might have had a more seemly beginning; but, being a true record, it must start with that sneeze, because it was the first happening in Georgina Huntingdon's life which she could remember distinctly.

She was in her high-chair by a window overlooking a gray sea, and with a bib under her chin, was being fed dripping spoonfuls of bread and milk from the silver porringer which rested on the sill. The bowl was almost on a level with her little blue shoes which she kept kicking up and down on the step of her high-chair, wherefore the restraining hand which seized her ankles at intervals. It was Mrs. Triplett's firm hand which clutched her, and Mrs. Triplett's firm hand which fed her, so there was not the usual dilly-dallying over Georgina's breakfast as when her mother held the spoon. She always made a game of it, chanting nursery rhymes in a gay, silver-bell-cockle-shell sort of way, as if she were one of

the "pretty maids all in a row," just stepped out of a picture book.

Mrs. Triplett was an elderly widow, a distant relative of the family, who lived with them. "Tippy" the child called her before she could speak plainly—, a foolish name for such a severe and dignified person, but Mrs. Triplett rather seemed to like it. Being the working housekeeper, companion and everything else which occasion required, she had no time to make a game of Georgina's breakfast, even if she had known how. Not once did she stop to say, "Curly-locks, Curly-locks, wilt thou be mine?" or to press her face suddenly against Georgina's dimpled rose-leaf cheek as if it were somthing too temptingly dear and sweet to be resisted. She merely said, "Here!" each time she thrust the spoon towards her.

Mrs. Triplett was in an especial hurry this morning, and did not even look up when old Jeremy came into the room to put more wood on the fire. In winter, when there was no garden work, Jeremy did everything about the house which required a man's hand. Although he must have been nearly eighty years old, he came in, tall and unbending, with a big log across his shoulder. He walked stiffly, but his back was as straight as the long poker with which he mended the fire.

Georgina had seen him coming and going about the place every day since she had been brought to live in this old gray house beside the sea, but this

was the first time he had made any lasting impression upon her memory. Henceforth, she was to carry with her as long as she should live the picture of a hale, red-faced old man with a woolen muffler wound around his lean throat. His knitted "wrist-warmers" slipped down over his mottled, deeply-veined hands when he stooped to roll the log into the fire. He let go with a grunt. The next instant a mighty sneeze seized him, and Georgina, who had been gazing in fascination at the shower of sparks he was making, saw all of his teeth go flying into the fire.

If his eyes had suddenly dropped from their sockets upon the hearth, or his ears floated off from the sides of his head, she could not have been more terrified, for she had not yet learned that one's teeth may be a separate part of one's anatomy. It was such a terrible thing to see a man go to pieces in this undreamed-of fashion, that she began to scream and writhe around in her high-chair until it nearly turned over.

She did upset the silver porringer, and what was left of the bread and milk splashed out on the floor, barely missing the rug. Mrs. Triplett sprang to snatch her from the toppling chair, thinking the child was having a spasm. She did not connect it with old Jeremy's sneeze until she heard his wrathful gibbering, and turned to see him holding up the teeth, which he had fished out of the fire with the tongs.

They were an old-fashioned set such as one never

sees now. They had been made in England. They were hinged together like jaws, and Georgina yelled again as she saw them all blackened and gaping, dangling from the tongs. It was not the grinning teeth themselves, however, which frightened her. It was the awful knowledge, vague though it was to her infant mind, that a human body could fly apart in that way. And Tippy, not understanding the cause of her terror, never thought to explain that they were false and had been made by a man in some out-of-the-way corner of Yorkshire, instead of by the Almighty, and that their removal was painless.

It was several years before Georgina learned the truth, and the impression made by the accident grew into a lurking fear which often haunted her as time wore on. She never knew at what moment she might fly apart herself. That it was a distressing experience she knew from the look on old Jeremy's face and the desperate pace at which he set off to have himself mended.

She held her breath long enough to hear the door bang shut after him and his hob-nailed shoes go scrunch, scrunch, through the gravel of the path around the house, then she broke out crying again so violently that Tippy had hard work quieting her. She picked up the silver porringer from the floor and told her to look at the pretty bowl. The fall had put a dent into its side. And what would

Georgina's great-great aunt have said could she have known what was going to happen to her handsome dish, poor lady! Surely she never would have left it to such a naughty namesake! Then, to stop her sobbing, Mrs. Triplett took one tiny finger-tip in her large ones, and traced the name which was engraved around the rim in tall, slim-looped letters: the name which had passed down through many christenings to its present owner, "Georgina Huntingdon."

Failing thus to pacify the frightened child, Mrs. Triplett held her up to the window overlooking the harbor, and dramatically bade her "hark!" Standing with her blue shoes on the window-sill, and a tear on each pink cheek, Georgina flattened her nose against the glass and obediently listened.

The main street of the ancient seaport town, upon which she gazed expectantly, curved three miles around the harbor, and the narrow board-walk which ran along one side of it all the way, ended abruptly just in front of the house in a waste of sand. So there was nothing to be seen but a fishing boat at anchor, and the waves crawling up the beach, and nothing to be heard but the jangle of a bell somewhere down the street. The sobs broke out again.

"Hush!" commanded Mrs. Triplett, giving her an impatient shake. "Hark to what's coming up along. Can't you stop a minute and give the Towncrier a chance? Or is it you're trying to outdo him?"

The word "Towncrier" was meaningless to

Georgina. There was nothing by that name in her linen book which held the pictures of all the animals from Ape to Zebra, and there was nothing by that name down in Kentucky where she had lived all of her short life until these last few weeks. She did not even know whether what Mrs. Triplett said was coming along would be wearing a hat or horns. The cow that lowed at the pasture bars every night back in Kentucky jangled a bell. Georgina had no distinct recollection of the cow, but because of it the sound of a bell was associated in her mind with horns. So horns were what she halfway expected to see, as she watched breathlessly, with her face against the glass.

"Hark to what he's calling!" urged Mrs. Triplett. "A fish auction. There's a big boat in this morning with a load of fish, and the Towncrier is telling everybody about it."

So a Towncrier was a man! The next instant Georgina saw him. He was an old man, with bent shoulders and a fringe of gray hair showing under the fur cap pulled down to meet his ears. But there was such a happy twinkle in his faded blue eyes, such goodness of heart in every wrinkle of the weather-beaten old face, that even the grumpiest people smiled a little when they met him, and everybody he spoke to stepped along a bit more cheerful, just because the hearty way he said "*Good* morning!" made the day seem really good.

"He's cold," said Tippy. "Let's tap on the window and beckon him to come in and warm himself before he starts back to town."

She caught up Georgina's hand to make it do the tapping, thinking it would please her to give her a share in the invitation, but in her touchy frame of mind it was only an added grievance to have her knuckles knocked against the pane, and her wails began afresh as the old man, answering the signal, shook his bell at her playfully, and turned towards the house.

As to what happened after that, Georgina's memory is a blank, save for a confused recollection of being galloped to Banbury Cross on somebody's knee, while a big hand helped her to clang the clapper of a bell far too heavy for her to swing alone. But some dim picture of the kindly face puckered into smiles for her comforting, stayed on in her mind as an object seen through a fog, and thereafter she never saw the Towncrier go kling-klanging along the street without feeling a return of that same sense of safety which his song gave her that morning. Somehow, it restored her confidence in all Creation which Jeremy's teeth had shattered in their fall.

Taking advantage of Georgina's contentment at being settled on the visitor's knee, Mrs. Triplett hurried for a cloth to wipe up the bread and milk. Kneeling on the floor beside it she sopped it up so energetically that what she was saying came in jerks.

"It's a mercy you happened along, Mr. Darcy, or she might have been screaming yet. I never saw a child go into such a sudden tantrum."

The answer came in jerks also, for it took a vigorous trotting of the knees to keep such a heavy child as Georgina on the bounce. And in order that his words might not interfere with the game he sang them to the tune of "Ride a Cock Horse."

"There must have been—some very good——
Reason for such—a hulla-ba-loo!"

"I'll tell you when I come back," said Mrs. Triplett, on her feet again by this time and halfway to the kitchen with the dripping floor cloth. But when she reappeared in the doorway her own concerns had crowded out the thought of old Jeremy's misfortune.

"My yeast is running all over the top of the crock, Mr. Darcy, and if I don't get it mixed right away the whole baking will be spoiled."

"That's all right, ma'am," was the answer. "Go ahead with your dough. I'll keep the little lass out of mischief. Many's the time I have sat by this fire with her father on my knee, as you know. But it's been years since I was in this room last."

There was a long pause in the Banbury Cross ride. The Crier was looking around the room from one familiar object to another with the gentle wistful-

ness which creeps into old eyes when they peer into the past for something that has ceased to be. Georgina grew impatient.

"More ride!" she commanded, waving her hands and clucking her tongue as he had just taught her to do.

"Don't let her worry you, Mr. Darcy," called Mrs. Triplett from the kitchen. "Her mother will be back from the post-office most any minute now. Just send her out here to me if she gets too bothersome."

Instantly Georgina cuddled her head down against his shoulder. She had no mind to be separated from this new-found playfellow. When he produced a battered silver watch from the pocket of his velveteen waistcoat, holding it over her ear, she was charmed into a prolonged silence. The clack of Tippy's spoon against the crock came in from the kitchen, and now and then the fire snapped or the green fore-log made a sing-song hissing.

More than thirty years had passed by since the old Towncrier first visited the Huntingdon home. He was not the Towncrier then, but a seafaring man who had sailed many times around the globe, and had his fill of adventure. Tired at last of such a roving life, he had found anchorage to his liking in this quaint old fishing town at the tip end of Cape Cod. Georgina's grandfather, George Justin Huntingdon, a judge and a writer of dry law books, had

been one of the first to open his home to him. They had been great friends, and little Justin, now Georgina's father, had been a still closer friend. Many a day they had spent together, these two, fishing or blueberrying or tramping across the dunes. The boy called him "Uncle Darcy," tagging after him like a shadow, and feeling a kinship in their mutual love of adventure which drew as strongly as family ties. The Judge always said that it was the old sailor's yarns of sea life which sent Justin into the navy "instead of the law office where he belonged."

As the old man looked down at Georgina's soft, brown curls pressed against his shoulder, and felt her little dimpled hand lying warm on his neck, he could almost believe it was the same child who had crept into his heart thirty years ago. It was hard to think of the little lad as grown, or as filling the responsible position of a naval surgeon. Yet when he counted back he realized that the Judge had been dead several years, and the house had been standing empty all that time. Justin had never been back since it was boarded up. He had written occasionally during the first of his absence, but only boyish scrawls which told little about himself.

The only real news which the old man had of him was in the three clippings from the Provincetown *Beacon,* which he carried about in his wallet. The first was a mention of Justin's excellent record in fighting a fever epidemic in some naval station in the

tropics. The next was the notice of his marriage to a Kentucky girl by the name of Barbara Shirley, and the last was a paragraph clipped from a newspaper dated only a few weeks back. It said that Mrs. Justin Huntingdon and little daughter, Georgina, would arrive soon to take possession of the old Huntingdon homestead which had been closed for many years. During the absence of her husband, serving in foreign parts, she would have with her Mrs. Maria Triplett.

The Towncrier had known Mrs. Triplett as long as he had known the town. She had been kind to him when he and his wife were in great trouble. He was thinking about that time now, because it had something to do with his last visit to the Judge in this very room. She had happened to be present, too. And the green fore-log had made that same sing-song hissing. The sound carried his thoughts back so far that for a few moments he ceased to hear the clack of the spoon.

CHAPTER II

GEORGINA'S PLAYMATE MOTHER

AS the Towncrier's revery brought him around to Mrs. Triplett's part in the painful scene which he was recalling, he heard her voice, and looking up, saw that she had come back into the room, and was standing by the window.

"There's Justin's wife now, Mr. Darcy, coming up the beach. Poor child, she didn't get her letter. I can tell she's disappointed from the way she walks along as if she could hardly push against the wind."

The old man, leaning sideways over the arm of his chair, craned his neck toward the window to peer out, but he did it without dislodging Georgina, who was repeating the "tick-tick" of the watch in a whisper, as she lay contentedly against the Towncrier's shoulder.

"She's naught but a slip of a girl," he commented, referring to Georgina's mother, slowly drawing into closer view. "She must be years younger than Justin. She came up to me in the post-office last week and told me who she was, and I've been intending ever since to get up this far to talk with her about him."

As they watched her she reached the end of the board-walk, and plunging ankle-deep into the sand, trudged slowly along as if pushed back by the wind. It whipped her skirts about her and blew the ends of her fringed scarf back over her shoulder. She made a bright flash of color against the desolate background. Scarf, cap and thick knitted reefer were all of a warm rose shade. Once she stopped, and with hands thrust into her reefer pockets, stood looking off towards the lighthouse on Long Point. Mrs. Triplett spoke again, still watching her.

"I didn't want to take Justin's offer when he first wrote to me, although the salary he named was a good one, and I knew the work wouldn't be more than I've always been used to. But I had planned to stay in Wellfleet this winter, and it always goes against the grain with me to have to change a plan once made. I only promised to stay until she was comfortably settled. A Portugese woman on one of the back streets would have come and cooked for her. But land! When I saw how strange and lonesome she seemed and how she turned to me for everything, I didn't have the heart to say go. I only named it once to her, and she sort of choked up and winked back the tears and said in that soft-spoken Southern way of hers, 'Oh, don't leave me, Tippy!' She's taken to calling me Tippy, just as Georgina does. 'When you talk about it I feel like a kitten shipwrecked on a desert island. It's all so

strange and dreadful here with just sea on one side and sand dunes on the other.' "

At the sound of her name, Georgina suddenly sat up straight and began fumbling the watch back into the velveteen pocket. She felt that it was time for her to come into the foreground again.

"More ride!" she demanded. The galloping began again, gently at first, then faster and faster in obedience to her wishes, until she seemed only a swirl of white dress and blue ribbon and flying brown curls. But this time the giddy going up and down was in tame silence. There was no accompanying song to make the game lively. Mrs. Triplett had more to say, and Mr. Darcy was too deeply interested to sing.

"Look at her now, stopping to read that sign set up on the spot where the Pilgrims landed. She does that every time she passes it. Says it cheers her up something wonderful, no matter how downhearted she is, to think that she wasn't one of the Mayflower passengers, and that she's nearly three hundred years away from their hardships and that dreadful first wash-day of theirs. Does seem to me though, that's a poor way to make yourself cheerful, just thinking of all the hard times you might have had but didn't."

"Thing it!" lisped Georgina, wanting undivided attention, and laying an imperious little hand on his cheek to force it. *"Thing!"*

He shook his head reprovingly, with a finger

across his lips to remind her that Mrs. Triplett was still talking; but she was not to be silenced in such a way. Leaning over until her mischievous brown eyes compelled him to look at her, she smiled like a dimpled cherub. Georgina's smile was something irresistible when she wanted her own way.

"Pleathe!" she lisped, her face so radiantly sure that no one could be hardhearted enough to resist the magic appeal of that word, that he could not disappoint her.

"The little witch!" he exclaimed. "She could wheedle the fish out of the sea if she'd say please to 'em that way. But how that honey-sweet tone and the yells she was letting loose awhile back could come out of that same little rose of a mouth, passes my understanding."

Mrs. Triplett had left them again and he was singing at the top of his quavering voice, "Rings on her fingers and bells on her toes," when the front door opened and Georgina's mother came in. The salt wind had blown color into her cheeks as bright as her rose-pink reefer. Her disappointment about the letter had left a wistful shadow in her big gray eyes, but it changed to a light of pleasure when she saw who was romping with Georgina. They were so busy with their game that neither of them noticed her entrance.

She closed the door softly behind her and stood with her back against it watching them a moment.

Then Georgina spied her, and with a rapturous cry of *"Barby!"* scrambled down and ran to throw herself into her mother's arms. Barby was her way of saying Barbara. It was the first word she had ever spoken and her proud young mother encouraged her to repeat it, even when her Grandmother Shirley insisted that it wasn't respectful for a child to call its mother by her first name.

"But I don't care whether it is or not," Barbara had answered. "All I want is for her to feel that we're the best chums in the world. And I'm *not* going to spoil her even if I am young and inexperienced. There are a few things that I expect to be very strict about, but making her respectful to me isn't one of them."

Now one of the things which Barbara had decided to be very strict about in Georgina's training was making her respectful to guests. She was not to thrust herself upon their notice, she was not to interrupt their conversation, or make a nuisance of herself. So, young as she was, Georgina had already learned what was expected of her, when her mother having greeted Mr. Darcy and laid aside her wraps, drew up to the fire to talk to him. But instead of doing the expected thing, Georgina did the forbidden. Since the old man's knees were crossed so that she could no longer climb upon them, she attempted to seat herself on his foot, clamoring, "Do it again!"

"No, dear," Barbara said firmly. "Uncle Darcy's

tired." She had noticed the long-drawn sigh of relief with which he ended the last gallop. "He's going to tell us about father when he was a little boy no bigger than you. So come here to Barby and listen or else go off to your own corner and play with your whirligig."

Usually, at the mention of some particularly pleasing toy Georgina would trot off happily to find it; but to-day she stood with her face drawn into a rebellious pucker and scowled at her mother savagely. Then throwing herself down on the rug she began kicking her blue shoes up and down on the hearth, roaring, *"No! No!"* at the top of her voice. Barbara paid no attention at first, but finding it impossible to talk with such a noise going on, dragged her up from the floor and looked around helplessly, considering what to do with her. Then she remembered the huge wicker clothes hamper, standing empty in the kitchen, and carrying her out, gently lowered her into it.

It was so deep that even on tiptoe Georgina could not look over the rim. All she could see was the ceiling directly overhead. The surprise of such a novel punishment made her hold her breath to find what was going to happen next, and in the stillness she heard her mother say calmly as she walked out of the room: "If she roars any more, Tippy, just put the lid on; but as soon as she is ready to act like a little lady, lift her out, please."

The strangeness of her surroundings kept her quiet a moment longer, and in that moment she discovered that by putting one eye to a loosely-woven spot in the hamper she could see what Mrs. Triplett was doing. She was polishing the silver porringer, trying to rub out the dent which the fall had made in its side. It was such an interesting kitchen, seen through this peep-hole that Georgina became absorbed in rolling her eye around for wider views. Then she found another outlook on the other side of the hamper, and was quiet so long that Mrs. Triplett came over and peered down at her to see what was the matter. Georgina looked up at her with a roguish smile. One never knew how she was going to take a punishment or what she would do next.

"Are you ready to be a little lady now? Want me to lift you out?" Both little arms were stretched joyously up to her, and a voice of angelic sweetness said coaxingly: *"Pleathe,* Tippy."

The porringer was in Mrs. Triplett's hand when she leaned over the hamper to ask the question. The gleam of its freshly-polished sides caught Georgina's attention an instant before she was lifted out, and it was impressed on her memory still more deeply by being put into her own hands afterwards as she sat in Mrs. Triplett's lap. Once more her tiny finger's tip was made to trace the letters engraved around the rim, as she was told about her great-great aunt and what was expected of her. The solemn

tone clutched her attention as firmly as the hand which held her, and somehow, before she was set free, she was made to feel that because of that old porringer she was obliged to be a little lady.

Tippy was not one who could sit calmly by and see a child suffer for lack of proper instruction, and while Georgina never knew just how it was done, the fact was impressed upon her as years went by that there were many things which she could not do, simply because she was a Huntingdon and because her name had been graven for so many generations around that shining silver rim.

Although to older eyes the happenings of that morning were trivial, they were far-reaching in their importance to Georgina, for they gave her three memories—Jeremy's teeth, the Towncrier's bell, and her own name on the porringer—to make a deep impression on all her after-life.

CHAPTER III

THE TOWNCRIER HAS HIS SAY

THE old Huntingdon house with its gray gables and stone chimneys, stood on the beach near the breakwater, just beyond the place where everything seemed to come to an end. The house itself marked the end of the town. Back of it the dreary dunes stretched away toward the Atlantic, and in front the Cape ran out in a long, thin tongue of sand between the bay and the harbor, with a lighthouse on its farthest point. It gave one the feeling of being at the very tip end of the world to look across and see the water closing in on both sides. Even the road ended in front of the house in a broad loop in which machines could turn around.

In summer there was always a string of sightseers coming up to this end of the beach. They came to read the tablet erected on the spot known to Georgina as "holy ground," because it marked the first landing of the Pilgrims. Long before she could read, Mrs. Triplett taught her to lisp part of a poem which said:

"Aye, call it holy ground,
The thoil where firth they trod."

She taught it to Georgina because she thought it was only fair to Justin that his child should grow up to be as proud of her New England home as she was of her Southern one. Barbara was always singing to her about "My Old Kentucky Home," and "Going Back to Dixie," and when they played together on the beach their favorite game was building Grandfather Shirley's house in the sand.

Day after day they built it up with shells and wet sand and pebbles, even to the stately gate posts topped by lanterns. Twigs of bayberry and wild beach plum made trees with which to border its avenues, and every dear delight of swing and arbor and garden pool beloved in Barbara's play-days, was reproduced in miniature until Georgina loved them, too. She knew just where the bee-hives ought to be put, and the sun-dial, and the hole in the fence where the little pigs squeezed through. There was a story for everything. By the time she had outgrown her lisp she could make the whole fair structure by herself, without even a suggestion from Barbara.

When she grew older the shore was her schoolroom also. She learned to read from letters traced in the sand, and to make them herself with shells and pebbles. She did her sums that way, too, after she had learned to count the sails in the harbor, the gulls feeding at ebb-tide, and the great granite blocks which formed the break-water.

Mrs. Triplett's time for lessons was when Geor-

gina was following her about the house. Such following taught her to move briskly, for Tippy, like time and tide, never waited, and it behooved one to be close at her heels if one would see what she put into a pan before she whisked it into the oven. Also it was necessary to keep up with her as she moved swiftly from the cellar to the pantry if one would hear her thrilling tales of Indians and early settlers and brave forefathers of colony times.

There was a powder horn hanging over the dining room mantel, which had been in the battle of Lexington, and Tippy expected Georgina to find the same inspiration in it which she did, because the forefather who carried it was an ancestor of each.

"The idea of a descendant of one of the Minutemen being afraid of *rats!*" she would say with a scornful rolling of her words which seemed to wither her listener with ridicule. "Or of an empty garret! *Tut!*"

When Georgina was no more than six, that disgusted "Tut!" would start her instantly down a dark cellar-way or up into the dreaded garret, even when she could feel the goose-flesh rising all over her. Between the porringer, which obliged her to be a little lady, and the powder horn, which obliged her to be brave, even while she shivered, some times Georgina felt that she had almost too much to live up to. There were times when she was sorry that she had ancestors. She was proud to think that one

of them shared in the honors of the tall Pilgrim monument overlooking the town and harbor, but there were days when she would have traded him gladly far an hour's play with two little Portugese boys and their sister, who often wandered up to the dunes back of the house.

She had watched them often enough to know that their names were Manuel and Joseph and Rosa. They were beautiful children, such as some of the old masters delighted to paint, but they fought and quarreled and—Tippy said—used "shocking language." That is why Georgina was not allowed to play with them, but she often stood at the back gate watching them, envying their good times together and hoping to hear a sample of their shocking language.

One day when they strolled by dragging a young puppy in a rusty saucepan by a string tied to the handle, the temptation to join them overcame her. Inch by inch her hand moved up nearer the forbidden gate latch and she was just slipping through when old Jeremy, hidden behind a hedge where he was weeding the borders, rose up like an all-seeing dragon and roared at her, "Coom away, lass! Ye maun't do that!"

She had not known that he was anywhere around, and the voice coming suddenly out of the unseen startled her so that her heart seemed to jump up into her throat. It made her angry, too.

Only the moment before she had heard Rosa scream at Manuel, "You ain't my boss; shut your big mouth!"

It was on the tip of her tongue to scream the same thing at old Jeremy and see what would happen. She felt, instinctively, that this was shocking language. But she had not yet outgrown the lurking fear which always seized her in his presence that either her teeth or his might fly out if she wasn't careful, so she made no answer. But compelled to vent her inward rebellion in some way, she turned her back on the hedge that screened him and shook the gate till the latch rattled.

Looking up she saw the tall Pilgrim monument towering over the town like a watchful giant. She had a feeling that it, too, was spying on her. No matter where she went, even away out in the harbor in a motor boat, it was always stretching its long neck up to watch her. Shaking back her curls, she looked up at it defiantly and made a face at it, just the ugliest pucker of a face she could twist her little features into.

But it was only on rare occasions that Georgina felt the longing for playmates of her own age. Usually she was busy with her lessons or happily following her mother and Mrs. Triplett around the house, sharing all their occupations. In jelly-making time she had the scrapings of the kettle to fill her own little glass. When they sewed she sewed with

them, even when she was so small that she had to have the thread tied in the needle's eye, and could do no more than pucker up a piece of soft goods into big wallops. But by the time she was nine years old she had learned to make such neat stitches that Barbara sent specimens of her needlework back to Kentucky, and folded others away in a little trunk of keepsakes, to save for her until she should be grown.

Also by the time she was nine she could play quite creditably a number of simple Etudes on the tinkly old piano which had lost some of its ivories. Her daily practicing was one of the few things about which Barbara was strict. So much attention had been given to her own education in music that she found joy in keeping up her interest in it, and wanted to make it one of Georgina's chief sources of pleasure. To that end she mixed the stories of the great operas and composers with her fairy tales and folk lore, until the child knew them as intimately as she did her Hans Andersen and Uncle Remus.

They often acted stories together, too. Even Mrs. Triplett was dragged into these, albeit unwillingly, for minor but necessary parts. For instance, in "Lord Ullin's Daughter," she could keep on with her knitting and at the same time do "the horsemen hard behind us ride," by clapping her heels on the hearth to sound like hoof-beats.

Acting came as naturally to Georgina as breathing. She could not repeat the simplest message without

unconsciously imitating the tone and gesture of the one who sent it. This dramatic instinct made a good reader of her when she took her turn with Barbara in reading aloud. They used to take page about, sitting with their arms around each other on the old claw-foot sofa, backed up against the library table.

At such performances the old Towncrier was often an interested spectator. Barbara welcomed him when he first came because he seemed to want to talk about Justin as much as she desired to hear. Later she welcomed him for his own sake, and grew to depend upon him for counsel and encouragement. Most of all she appreciated his affectionate interest in Georgina. If he had been her own grandfather he could not have taken greater pride in her little accomplishments. More than once he had tied her thread in her needle for her when she was learning to sew, and it was his unfailing praise of her awkward attempts which encouraged her to keep on until her stitches were really praiseworthy.

He applauded her piano playing from her first stumbling attempt at scales to the last simple waltz she had just learned. He attended many readings, beginning with words of one syllable, on up to such books as "The Leatherstocking Tales." He came in one day, however, as they were finishing a chapter in one of the Judge's favorite novels, and no sooner had Georgina skipped out of the room on an errand

than he began to take her mother to task for allowing her to read anything of that sort.

"You'll make the lass old before her time!" he scolded. "A little scrap like her ought to be playing with other children instead of reading books so far over her head that she can only sort of tip-toe up to them."

"But it's the stretching that makes her grow, Uncle Darcy," Barbara answered in an indulgent tone. He went on heedless of her interruption.

"And she tells me that she sometimes sits as much as an hour at a time, listening to you play on the piano, especially if it's 'sad music' that makes you think of someone looking off to sea for a ship that never comes in, or of waves creeping up in a lonely place where the fog-bell tolls.' Those were her very words, and she looked so mournful that it worried me. It isn't natural for a child of her age to sit with a far-away look in her eyes, as if she were seeing things that ain't there."

Barbara laughed.

"Nonsense, Uncle Darcy. As long as she keeps her rosy cheeks and is full of life, a little dreaming can't hurt her. You should have seen her doing the elfin dance this morning. She entered into the spirit of it like a little whirlwind. And, besides, there are no children anywhere near that I can allow her to play with. I have only a few acquaintances in the town, and they are too far from us to make visiting

easy between the children. But look at the time *I* give to her. I play with her so much that we're more like two chums than mother and child."

"Yes, but it would be better for both of you if you had more friends outside. Then Georgina wouldn't feel the sadness of 'someone looking off to sea for a ship that never comes in.' She feels your separation from Justin and your watching for his letters and your making your whole life just a waiting time between his furloughs, more than you have any idea of."

"But, Uncle Darcy!" exclaimed Barbara, "it would be just the same no matter how many friends I had. They couldn't make me forget his absence."

"No, but they could get you interested in other things, and Georgina would feel the difference, and be happier because you would not seem to be waiting and anxious. There's some rare, good people in this town, old friends of the family who tried to make you feel at home among them when you first came."

"I know," admitted Barbara, slowly, "but I was so young then, and so homesick that strangers didn't interest me. Now Georgina is old enough to be thoroughly companionable, and our music and sewing and household duties fill our days."

It was a subject they had discussed before, without either convincing the other, and the old man had always gone away at such times with a feeling of defeat. But this time as he took his leave, it was

with the determination to take the matter in hand himself. He felt he owed it to the Judge to do that much for his grandchild. The usual crowds of summer people would be coming soon. He had heard that Gray Inn was to be re-opened this summer. That meant there would probably be children at this end of the beach. If Opportunity came that near to Georgina's door he knew several ways of inducing it to knock. So he went off smiling to himself.

CHAPTER IV

NEW FRIENDS AND THE GREEN STAIRS

THE town filled up with artists earlier than usual that summer. Stable lofts and old boathouses along the shore blossomed into studios. Sketching classes met in the rooms of the big summer art schools which made the Cape end famous, or set up their models down by the wharfs. One ran into easels pitched in the most public places: on busy street corners, on the steps of the souvenir shops and even in front of the town hall. People in paint-besmeared smocks, loaded with canvases, sketching stools and palettes, filled the board-walk and overflowed into the middle of the street.

The *Dorothy Bradford* steamed up to the wharf from Boston with her daily load of excursionists, and the "accommodation" busses began to ply up and down the three miles of narrow street with its restless tide of summer visitors.

Up along, through the thick of it one June morning, came the Towncrier, a picturesque figure in his short blue jacket and wide seaman's trousers, a red bandanna knotted around his throat and a wide-rimmed straw hat on the back of his head.

"Notice!" he cried, after each vigorous ringing of his big brass bell. "Lost, between Mayflower Heights and the Gray Inn, a black leather bill-case with important papers."

He made slow progress, for someone stopped him at almost every rod with a word of greeting, and he stopped to pat every dog which thrust a friendly nose into his hand in passing. Several times strangers stepped up to him to inquire into his affairs as if he were some ancient historical personage come to life. Once he heard a man say:

"Quick with your kodak, Ethel. Catch the Town-crier as he comes along. They say there's only one other place in the whole United States that has one. You can't afford to miss anything *this* quaint."

It was nearly noon when he came towards the end of the beach. He walked still more slowly here, for many cottages had been opened for summer residents since the last time he passed along, and he knew some of the owners. He noticed that the loft above a boat-house which had once been the studio of a famous painter of marine scenes was again in use. He wondered who had taken it. Almost across from it was the "Green Stairs" where Georgina always came to meet him if she were outdoors and heard his bell.

The "Green Stairs" was the name she had given to a long flight of wooden steps with a railing on each side, leading from the sidewalk up a steep embank-

ment to the bungalow on top. It was a wide-spreading bungalow with as many windows looking out to sea as a lighthouse, and had had an especial interest for Georgina, since she heard someone say that its owner, Mr. Milford, was an old bachelor who lived by himself. She used to wonder when she was younger if "all the bread and cheese he got he kept upon a shelf." Once she asked Barbara why he didn't "go to London to get him a wife," and was told probably because he had so many guests that there wasn't time. Interesting people were always coming and going about the house; men famous for things they had done or written or painted.

Now as the Towncrier came nearer, he saw Georgina skipping along toward him with her jumping rope. She was bare-headed, her pink dress fluttering in the salt breeze, her curls blowing back from her glowing little face. He would have hastened his steps to meet her, but his honest soul always demanded a certain amount of service from himself for the dollar paid him for each trip of this kind. So he went on at his customary gait, stopping at the usual intervals to ring his bell and call his news.

At the Green Stairs Georgina paused, her attention attracted by a foreign-looking battleship just steaming into the harbor. She was familiar with nearly every kind of sea-going craft that ever anchored here, but she could not classify this one. With her hands behind her, clasping her jumping rope

ready for another throw, she stood looking out to sea. Presently a slight scratching sound behind her made her turn suddenly. Then she drew back startled, for she was face to face with a dog which was sitting on the step just on a level with her eyes. He was a ragged-looking tramp of a dog, an Irish terrier, but he looked at her in such a knowing, human way that she spoke to him as if he had been a person.

"For goodness' sake, how you made me jump! I didn't know anybody was sitting there behind me."

It was almost uncanny the way his eyes twinkled through his hair, as if he were laughing with her over some good joke they had together. It gave her such a feeling of comradeship that she stood and smiled back at him. Suddenly he raised his right paw and thrust it towards her. She drew back another step. She was not used to dogs, and she hesitated about touching anything with such claws in it as the paw he gravely presented.

But as he continued to hold it out she felt it would be impolite not to respond in some way, so reaching out very cautiously she gave it a limp shake. Then as he still kept looking at her with questioning eyes she asked quite as if she expected him to speak, "What's your name, Dog?"

A voice from the top of the steps answered, "It's Captain Kidd." Even more startled than when the dog had claimed her attention, she glanced up to

see a small boy on the highest step. He was sucking an orange, but he took his mouth away from it long enough to add, "His name's on his collar that he got yesterday, and so's mine. You can look at 'em if you want to."

Georgina leaned forward to peer at the engraving on the front of the collar, but the hair on the shaggy throat hid it, and she was timid about touching a spot just below such a wide open mouth with a red tongue lolling out of it. She put her hands behind her instead.

"Is—is he—a pirate dog?" she ventured.

The boy considered a minute, not wanting to say yes if pirates were not respectable in her eyes, and not wanting to lose the chance of glorifying him if she held them in as high esteem as he did. After a long meditative suck at his orange he announced, "Well, he's just as good as one. He buries all his treasures. That's why we call him Captain Kidd."

Georgina shot a long, appraising glance at the boy from under her dark lashes. His eyes were dark, too. There was something about him that attracted her, even if his face was smeary with orange juice and streaked with dirty finger marks. She wanted to ask more about Captain Kidd, but her acquaintance with boys was as slight as with dogs. Overcome by a sudden shyness she threw her rope over her head and went skipping on down the boardwalk to meet the Towncrier.

The boy stood up and looked after her. He wished she hadn't been in such a hurry. It had been the longest morning he ever lived through. Having arrived only the day before with his father to visit at the bungalow he hadn't yet discovered what there was for a boy to do in this strange place. Everybody had gone off and left him with the servants, and told him to play around till they got back. It wouldn't be long, they said, but he had waited and waited until he felt he had been looking out to sea from the top of those green steps all the days of his life. Of course, he wouldn't want to play with just a girl, but——

He watched the pink dress go fluttering on, and then he saw Georgina take the bell away from the old man as if it were her right to do so. She turned and walked along beside him, tinkling it faintly as she talked. He wished *he* had a chance at it. He'd show her how loud he could make it sound.

"Notice," called the old man, seeing faces appear at some of the windows they were passing. "Lost, a black leather bill-case——"

The boy, listening curiously, slid down the steps until he reached the one on which the dog was sitting, and put his arm around its neck. The banister posts hid him from the approaching couple. He could hear Georgina's eager voice piping up flute-like:

"It's a pirate dog, Uncle Darcy. He's named Captain Kidd because he buries his treasures."

In answer the old man's quavering voice rose in a song which he had roared lustily many a time in his younger days, aboard many a gallant vessel:

"Oh, my name is Captain Kidd,
And many wick-ud things I did,
And heaps of gold I hid,
As I sailed."

The way his voice slid down on the word wick-*ud* made a queer thrilly feeling run down the boy's back, and all of a sudden the day grew wonderfully interesting, and this old seaport town one of the nicest places he had ever been in. The singer stopped at the steps and Georgina, disconcerted at finding the boy at such close range when she expected to see him far above her, got no further in her introduction to Captain Kidd than "Here he——"

But the old man needed no introduction. He had only to speak to the dog to set every inch of him quivering in affectionate response. "Here's a friend worth having," the raggedy tail seemed to signal in a wig-wag code of its own.

Then the wrinkled hand went from the dog's head to the boy's shoulder with the same kind of an affectionate pat. "What's *your* name, son?"

"Richard Morland."

"What?" was the surprised question. "Are you a son of the artist Morland, who is visiting up here at the Milford bungalow?"

"Yes, that's us."

"Well, bless my stars, it's *his* bill-case I have been crying all morning. If I'd known there was a fine lad like you sitting about doing nothing, I'd had you with me, ringing the bell."

The little fellow's face glowed. He was as quick to recognize a friend worth having as Captain Kidd had been.

"Say," he began, "if it was Daddy's bill-case you were shouting about, you needn't do it any longer. It's found. Captain Kidd came in with it in his mouth just after Daddy went away. He was starting to dig a hole in the sand down by the garage to bury it in, like he does everything. He's hardly done being a puppy yet, you know. I took it away from him and reckanized it, and I've been waiting here all morning for Dad to come home."

He began tugging at the pocket into which he had stowed the bill-case for safe-keeping, and Captain Kidd, feeling that it was his by right of discovery, stood up, wagging himself all over, and poking his nose in between them, with an air of excited interest. The Towncrier shook his finger at him.

"You rascal! I suppose you'll be claiming the reward next thing, you old pirate! How old is he, Richard?"

"About a year. He was given to me when he was just a little puppy."

"And how old are you, son?"

"Ten my last birthday, but I'm so big for my age I wear 'leven-year-old suits."

Now the Towncrier hadn't intended to stop, but the dog began burrowing its head ecstatically against him, and there was something in the boy's lonesome, dirty little face which appealed to him, and the next thing he knew he was sitting on the bottom step of the Green Stairs with Georgina beside him, telling the most thrilling pirate story he knew. And he told it more thrillingly than he had ever told it before. The reason for this was he had never had such a spellbound listener before. Not even Justin had hung on each word with the rapt interest this boy showed. His dark eyes seemed to grow bigger and more luminous with each sentence, more intense in their piercing gaze. His sensitive mouth changed expression with every phase of the adventure—danger, suspense, triumph. He scarcely breathed, he was listening so hard.

Suddenly the whistle at the cold-storage plant began to blow for noon, and the old man rose stiffly, saying:

"I'm a long way from home, I should have started back sooner."

"Oh, but you haven't finished the story!" cried the boy, in distress at this sudden ending. "It *couldn't* stop there."

Georgina caught him by the sleeve of the old blue jacket to pull him back to the seat beside her.

"*Please,* Uncle Darcy!"

It was the first time in all her coaxing that that magic word failed to bend him to her wishes.

"No," he answered firmly, "I can't finish it now, but I'll tell you what I'll do. This afternoon I'll row up to this end of the beach in my dory and take you two children out to the weirs to see the net hauled in. There's apt to be a big catch of squid worth going to see, and I'll finish the story on the way. Will that suit you?"

Richard stood up, as eager and excited as Captain Kidd always was when anybody said "Rats!" But the next instant the light died out of his eyes and he plumped himself gloomily down on the step, as if life were no longer worth living.

"Oh, bother!" he exclaimed. "I forgot. I can't go anywhere. Dad's painting my portrait, and I have to stick around so's he can work on it any old time he feels like it. That's why he brought me on this visit with him, so's he can finish it up here."

"Maybe you can beg off, just for to-day," suggested Mr. Darcy.

"No, it's very important," he explained gravely. "It's the best one Daddy's done yet, and the last thing before we left home Aunt Letty said, 'Whatever you do, boys, don't let anything interfere with getting that picture done in time to hang in the exhibition,' and we both promised."

There was gloomy silence for a moment, broken by the old man's cheerful voice.

"Well, don't you worry till you see what we can do. I want to see your father anyhow about this bill-case business, so I'll come around this afternoon, and if he doesn't let you off to-day maybe he will to-morrow. Just trust your Uncle Darcy for getting where he starts out to go. Skip along home, Georgina, and tell your mother I want to borrow you for the afternoon."

An excited little pink whirlwind with a jumping rope going over and over its head, went flying up the street toward the end of the beach. A smiling old man with age looking out of his faded blue eyes but with the spirit of boyhood undimmed in his heart, walked slowly down towards the town. And on the bottom step of the Green Stairs, his arm around Captain Kidd, the boy sat watching them, looking from one to the other as long as they were in sight. The heart of him was pounding deliciously to the music of such phrases as, *"Fathoms deep, lonely beach, spade and pickaxe, skull and crossbones, bags of golden doubloons and chests of ducats and pearls!"*

CHAPTER V

IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF PIRATES

THE weirs, to which they took their way that afternoon in the Towncrier's dory, *The Betsey,* was "the biggest fish-trap in any waters thereabouts," the old man told them. And it happened that the net held an unusually large catch that day. Barrels and barrels of flapping squid and mackerel were emptied into the big motor boat anchored alongside of it.

At a word from Uncle Darcy, an obliging fisherman in oilskins held out his hand to help the children scramble over the side of *The Betsey* to a seat on top of the cabin where they could have a better view. All the crew were Portuguese. The man who helped them climb over was Joe Fayal, father of Manuel and Joseph and Rosa. He stood like a young brown Neptune, his white teeth flashing when he laughed, a pitchfork in his hands with which to spear the goosefish as they turned up in the net, and throw them back into the sea. If nothing else had happened that sight alone was enough to mark it as a memorable afternoon.

Nothing else did happen, really, except that on

the way out, Uncle Darcy finished the story begun on the Green Stairs and on the way back told them another. But what Richard remembered ever after as seeming to have happened, was that *The Betsey* suddenly turned into a Brigantine. Perched up on one of the masts, an unseen spectator, he watched a mutiny flare up among the sailors, and saw that "strutting, swaggering villain, John Quelch, throw the captain overboard and take command himself." He saw them hoist a flag they called "Old Roger," "having in the middle of it an Anatomy (skeleton) with an hour-glass in one hand and a dart in the heart with three drops of blood proceeding from it."

He heard the roar that went up from all those bearded throats—(wonderful how Uncle Darcy's thin, quavering voice could sound that whole chorus)——

"Of all the lives, I ever say,
A Pirate's be for I.
Hap what hap may, he's allus gay
An' drinks an' bungs his eye.
For his work he's never loth,
An' a-pleasurin' he'll go
Tho' certain sure to be popt off.
Yo ho, with the rum below."

And then they made after the Portuguese vessels,

nine of them, and took them all (What a bloody fight it was!), and sailed away with a dazzling store of treasure, "enough to make an honest sailorman rub his eyes and stagger in his tracks."

Richard had not been brought up on stories as Georgina had. He had had few of this kind, and none so breathlessly realistic. It carried him out of himself so completely that as they rowed slowly back to town he did not see a single house in it, although every western window-pane flashed back the out-going sun like a golden mirror. His serious, brown eyes were following the adventures of these bold sea-robbers, "marooned three times and wounded nine and blowed up in the air."

When all of a sudden the brigantine changed back into *The Betsey,* and he had to climb out at the boat-landing, he had somewhat of the dazed feeling of that honest sailor-man. He had heard enough to make him "rub his eyes and stagger in his tracks."

Uncle Darcy, having put them ashore, rowed off with the parting injunction to skip along home. Georgina did skip, so light of foot and quick of movement that she was in the lead all the way to the Green Stairs. There she paused and waited for Richard to join her. As he came up he spoke for the first time since leaving the weirs.

"Wish I knew the boys in this town. Wish I knew which one would be the best to get to go digging with me."

Georgina did not need to ask, "digging for what?" She, too, had been thinking of buried treasure.

"*I'll* go with you," she volunteered sweetly.

He turned on her an inquiring look, as if he were taking her measure, then glanced away indifferently.

"You couldn't. You're a girl."

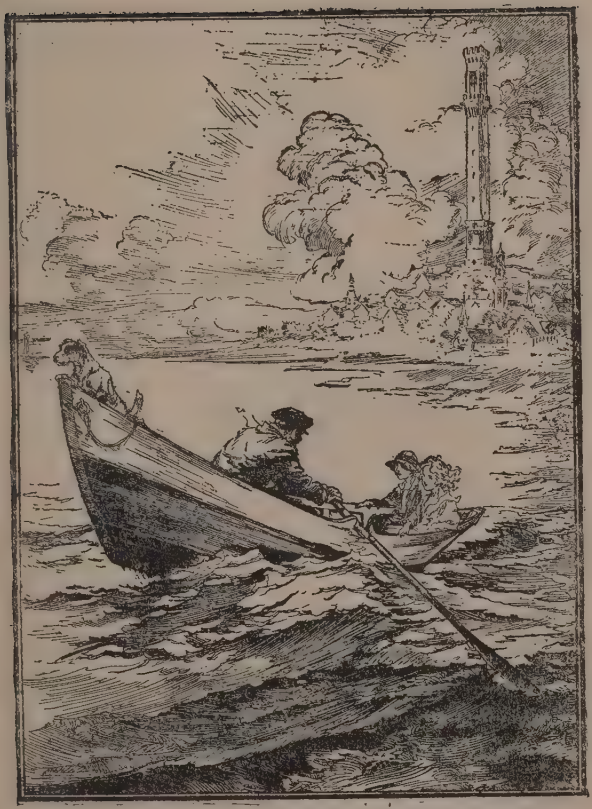
It was a matter-of-fact statement with no suspicion of a taunt in it, but it stung Georgina's pride. Her eyes blazed defiantly and she tossed back her curls with a proud little uplift of the chin. It must be acknowledged that her nose, too, took on the trifle of a tilt. Her challenge was unspoken but so evident that he answered it.

"Well, you know you couldn't creep out into the night and go along a lonely shore into dark caves and everything."

"*Pity* I couldn't!" she answered with withering scorn. "I could go anywhere *you* could, anybody descended from heroes like *I* am. I don't want to be braggity, but I'd have you to know they put up that big monument over there for one of them, and another was a Minute-man. With all that, for you to think I'd be afraid! *Tut!*"

Not Tippy herself had ever spoken that word with finer scorn. With a flirt of her short skirts Georgina turned and started disdainfully up the street.

"Wait," called Richard. He liked the sudden flare-up of her manner. There was something con-



They took their Way in the Betsey

vincing about it. Besides, he didn't want her to go off in that independent way as if she meant never to come back. It was she who had brought the Town-crier, that matchless Teller of Tales, across his path.

"I didn't say you wasn't brave," he called after her.

She hesitated, then stopped, turning half-way around.

"I just said you was a girl. Most of them *are* 'fraid cats, but if you ain't I don't know as I'd mind taking you along. That is," he added cautiously, "if I could be dead sure that you're game."

At that Georgina turned all the way around and came back a few steps.

"You can try me," she answered, anxious to prove herself worthy to be taken on such a quest, and as eager as he to begin it.

"You think of the thing you're most afraid of yourself, and tell me to do it, and then just watch me."

Richard declined to admit any fear of anything. Georgina named several terrors at which he stoutly shook his head, but presently with uncanny insight she touched upon his weakest point.

"Would you be afraid of coffins and spooks or to go to a graveyard in the dead of the night the way Tom Sawyer and Huck Finn did?"

Not having read Tom Sawyer, Richard evaded the question by asking, "How did they do?"

"Oh, don't you know? They had the dead cat and they saw old Injun Joe come with the lantern and kill the man that was with Muff Potter."

By the time Georgina had given the bare outline of the story in her dramatic way, Richard was quite sure that no power under heaven could entice him into a graveyard at midnight, though nothing could have induced him to admit this to Georgina. As far back as he could remember he had had an unreasoning dread of coffins. Even now, big as he was, big enough to wear " 'leven-year-old suits," nothing could tempt him into a furniture shop for fear of seeing a coffin.

One of his earliest recollections was of his nurse taking him into a little shop, at some village where they were spending the summer, and his cold terror when he found himself directly beside a long brown one, smelling of varnish, and with silver handles. His nurse's tales had much to do with creating this repulsion, also her threat of shutting him up in a coffin if he wasn't a good boy. When she found that she could exact obedience by keeping that dread hanging over him, she used the threat daily.

"I'll tell you what I'll do," he said finally. "I'll let you go digging with me if you're game enough to go to the graveyard and walk clear across it all by yourself and"—dropping his voice to a hollow whisper—*"touch—ten—tombstones!"*

Now, if Richard hadn't dropped his voice in that

scary way when he said, "and touch ten tombstones," it would have been no test at all of Georgina's courage. Strange, how just his way of saying those four words suddenly made the act such a fearsome one.

"Do it right now," he suggested.

"But it isn't night yet," she answered, "let alone being mid-night."

"No, but it's clouding up, and the sun's down. By the time we'd get to a graveyard it would be dark enough for me to tell if you're game."

Up to this time Georgina had never gone anywhere without permission. But this was something one couldn't explain very well at home. It seemed better to do it first and explain afterward.

Fifteen minutes later, two children and a dog arrived hot and panting at the entrance to the old burying ground. On a high sand dune, covered with thin patches of beach and poverty grass, and a sparse growth of scraggly pines, it was a desolate spot at any time, and now doubly so in the gathering twilight. The lichen-covered slabs that marked the graves of the early settlers leaned this way and that along the hill.

The gate was locked, but Georgina found a place where the palings were loose, and squeezed through, leaving Richard and the dog outside. They watched her through the fence as she toiled up the steep hill. The sand was so deep that she plunged in over her shoe-tops at every step. Once on top it was easier

going. The matted beach grass made a firm turf. She stopped and read the names on some of the slabs before she plucked up courage to touch one. She would not have hesitated an instant if only Richard had not dared her in that scary way.

Some little, wild creature started up out of the grass ahead of her and scurried away. Her heart beat so fast she could hear the blood pounding against her ear-drums. She looked back. Richard was watching, and she was to wave her hand each time she touched a stone so that he could keep count with her. She stooped and peered at one, trying to read the inscription. The clouds had hurried the coming of twilight. It was hard to decipher the words.

"None knew him but to love him," she read slowly. Instantly her dread of the place vanished. She laid her hand on the stone and then waved to Richard. Then she ran on and read and touched another. "Lost at sea," that one said, and under the next slabs slept "Deliverance" and "Experience," "Mercy," and "Thankful." What queer names people had in those early days! And what strange pictures they etched in the stone of those old gray slabs—urns and angels and weeping willows!

She signaled the tenth and last. Richard wondered why she did not turn and come back. At the highest point of the hill she stood as if transfixed, a slim little silhouette against the darkening sky, her

hands clasped in amazement. Suddenly she turned and came tearing down the hill, floundering through sand, falling and picking herself up, only to flounder and fall again, finally rolling down the last few yards of the embankment.

"What scared you?" asked Richard, his eyes big with excitement as he watched what seemed to be her terrified exit. "What did you see?" But she would not speak until she had squeezed between the palings and stood beside him. Then she told him in an impressive whisper, glancing furtively over her shoulder:

"There's a whole row of tombstones up there with *skulls and cross-bones on them! They must be pirate graves!*"

Her mysterious air was so contagious that he answered in a whisper, and in a moment each was convinced by the other's mere manner that their suspicion was true. Presently Georgina spoke in her natural voice.

"You go up and look at them."

"Naw, I'll take your word for it," he answered in a patronizing tone. "Besides, there isn't time now. It's getting too dark. They'll be expecting me home to supper."

Georgina glanced about her. The clouds settling heavily made it seem later than it really was. She had a guilty feeling that Barby was worrying about her long absence, maybe imagining that something

had happened to *The Betsey*. She started homeward, half running, but her pace slackened as Richard, hurrying along beside her, began to plan what they would do with their treasure when they found it.

"There's sure to be piles of buried gold around here," he said. "Those pirate graves prove that a lot of 'em lived here once. Let's buy a moving picture show first."

Georgina's face grew radiant at this tacit admission of herself into partnership.

"Oh, yes," she assented joyfully. "And then we can have moving pictures made of *us* doing all sorts of things. Won't it be fun to sit back and watch ourselves and see how we look doing 'em?"

"Say! that's great," he exclaimed. "All the kids in town will want to be in the pictures, too, but we'll have the say-so, and only those who do exactly to suit us can have a chance of getting in."

"But the more we let in the more money we'd make in the show," was Georgina's shrewd answer. "Everybody will want to see what their child looks like in the movies, so, of course, that'll make people come to our show instead of the other ones."

"Say," was the admiring reply. "You're a partner worth having. You've got a *head*."

Such praise was the sweetest incense to Georgina. She burned to call forth more.

"Oh, I can think of lots of things when once I get started," she assured him with a grand air.

As they ran along Richard glanced several times at the head from which had come such valuable suggestions. There was a gleam of gold in the brown curls which bobbed over her shoulders. He liked it. He hadn't noticed before that her hair was pretty.

There was a gleam of gold, also, in the thoughts of each. They could fairly see the nuggets they were soon to unearth, and their imaginations, each fired by the other, shoveled out the coin which the picture show was to yield them, in the same way that the fisherman had shoveled the shining mackerel into the boat. They had not attempted to count them, simply measured them by the barrelful.

"Don't tell anybody," Richard counseled her as they parted at the Green Stairs. "Cross your heart and body you won't tell a soul. We want to surprise 'em."

Georgina gave the required sign and promise, as gravely as if it were an oath.

From the front porch Richard's father and cousin, James Milford, watched him climb slowly up the Green Stairs.

"Dicky looks as if the affairs of the nation were on his shoulders," observed Cousin James. "Pity he doesn't realize these are his care-free days."

"They're not," answered the elder Richard. "They're the most deadly serious ones he'll ever have. I don't know what he's got on his mind now, but whatever it is I'll wager it is more important business than that deal you're trying to pull off with the Cold Storage people."

CHAPTER VI

SPEND-THE-DAY GUESTS

THERE was a storm that night and next day a heavy fog dropped down like a thick white veil over town and sea. It was so cold that Jeremy lighted a fire, not only in the living room but in the guest chamber across the hall.

A week earlier Tippy had announced, "It'll never do to let Cousin Mehitable Huntingdon go back to Hyannis without having broken bread with us. She'd talk about it to the end of her days, if we were the only relations in town who failed to ask her in to a meal, during her fortnight's visit. And, of course, if we ask her, all the family she's staying with ought to be invited, and we've never had the new minister and his wife here to eat. Might as well do it all up at once while we're about it."

Spend-the-day guests were rare in Georgina's experience. The grand preparations for their entertainment which went on that morning put the new partnership and the treasure-quest far into the background. She forgot it entirely while the dining-room table, stretched to its limit, was being set with the best china and silver as if for a Thanksgiving feast.

Mrs. Fayal, the mother of Manuel and Joseph and Rosa, came over to help in the kitchen, and Tippy whisked around so fast that Georgina, tagging after, was continually meeting her coming back.

Georgina was following to ask questions about the expected guests. She liked the gruesome sound of that term "blood relations" as Tippy used it, and wanted to know all about this recently discovered "in-law," the widow of her grandfather's cousin, Thomas Huntingdon. Barby could not tell her and Mrs. Triplett, too busy to be bothered, set her down to turn the leaves of the family album. But the photograph of Cousin Mehitable had been taken when she was a boarding-school miss in a disfiguring hat and basque, and bore little resemblance to the imposing personage who headed the procession of visitors, arriving promptly at eleven o'clock.

When Cousin Mehitable came into the room in her widow's bonnet with the long black veil hanging down behind, she seemed to fill the place as the massive black walnut wardrobe upstairs filled the alcove. She lifted her eyeglasses from the hook on her dress to her hooked nose to look at Georgina before she kissed her. Under that gaze the child felt as awed as if the big wardrobe had bent over and put a wooden kiss on her forehead and said in a deep, whispery sort of voice, "So this is the Judge's granddaughter. How do you do, my dear?"

All the guests were middle aged and most of them

portly. There were so many that they filled all the chairs and the long claw-foot sofa besides. Georgina sat on a foot-stool, her hands folded in her lap until the others took out their knitting and embroidery. Then she ran to get the napkin she was hemming. The husbands who had been invited did not arrive until time to sit down to dinner and they left immediately after the feast.

Georgina wished that everybody would keep still and let one guest at a time do the talking. After the first few minutes of general conversation the circle broke into little groups, and it wasn't possible to follow the thread of the story in more than one. Each group kept bringing to light some bit of family history that she wanted to hear or some old family joke which they laughed over as if it were the funniest thing that ever happened. It was tantalizing not to be able to hear them all. It made her think of times when she rummaged through the chests in the attic, pulling out fascinating old garments and holding them up for Tippy to supply their history. But this was as bad as opening all the chests at once. While she was busy with one she was missing all that was being hauled out to the light of day from the others.

Several times she moved her foot-stool from one group to another, drawn by some sentence such as, "Well, she certainly was the prettiest bride I ever laid my two eyes on, but not many of us would want to stand in her shoes now." Or from across the

room, "They do say it was what happened the night of the wreck that unbalanced his mind, but I've always thought it was having things go at sixes and sevens at home as they did."

Georgina would have settled herself permanently near Cousin Mehitable, she being the most dramatic and voluble of them all, but she had a tantalizing way of lowering her voice at the most interesting part, and whispering the last sentence behind her hand. Georgina was nearly consumed with curiosity each time that happened, and fairly ached to know these whispered revelations.

It was an entrancing day—the dinner so good, the ancient jokes passing around the table all so new and witty to Georgina, hearing them now for the first time. She wished that a storm would come up to keep everybody at the house overnight and thus prolong the festal feeling. She liked this "Company" atmosphere in which everyone seemed to grow expansive of soul and gracious of speech. She loved every relative she had to the remotest "in-law."

Her heart swelled with a great thankfulness to think that she was not an orphan. Had she been one there would have been no one to remark that her eyes were exactly like Justin's and she carried herself like a Huntingdon, but that she must have inherited her smile from the other side of the house. Barbara had that same smile and winning way with her. It was pleasant to be discussed when only pleasant things

were said, and to have her neat stitches exclaimed over and praised as they were passed around.

She thought about it again after dinner, and felt so sorry for children who were orphans, that she decided to spend a large part of her share of the buried treasure in making them happy. She was sure that Richard would give part of his share, too, when he found it, and when the picture show which they were going to buy was in good running order, they would make it a rule that orphans should always be let in free.

She came back from this pleasant day-dream to hear Cousin Mehitable saying, "Speaking of thieves, does anyone know what ever became of poor Dan Darcy?"

Nobody knew, and they all shook their heads and said that it was a pity that he had turned out so badly. It was hard to believe it of him when he had always been such a kind, pleasant-spoken boy, just like his father; and if ever there was an honest soul in the whole round world it was the old Town-crier.

At that Georgina gave such a start that she ran her needle into her thumb, and a tiny drop of blood spurted out. She did not know that Uncle Darcy had a son. She had never heard his name mentioned before. She had been at his house many a time, and there never was anyone there besides himself except his wife, "Aunt Elspeth" (who was so old and feeble

that she stayed in bed most of the time), and the three cats, "John Darcy and Mary Darcy and old Yellownose." That's the way the old man always spoke of them. He called them his family.

Georgina was glad that the minister's wife was a newcomer in the town and asked to have it explained. Everybody contributed a scrap of the story, for all side conversations stopped at the mention of Dan Darcy's name, and the interest of the whole room centered on him.

It was years ago, when he was not more than eighteen that it happened. He was a happy-go-lucky sort of fellow who couldn't be kept down to steady work such as a job in the bank or a store. He was always off a-fishing or on the water, but everybody liked him and said he'd settle down when he was a bit older. He had a friend much like himself, only a little older. Emmett Potter was his name. There was a regular David and Jonathan friendship between those two. They were hand-in-glove in everything till Dan went wrong. Both even liked the same girl, Belle Triplett.

Here Georgina's needle gave her another jab. She laid down her hemming to listen. This was bringing the story close home, for Belle Triplett was Tippy's niece, or rather her husband's niece. While that did not make Belle one of the Huntingdon family, Georgina had always looked upon her as such. She visited at the house oftener than anyone else.

Nobody in the room came right out and said what it was that Dan had done, but by putting the scraps together Georgina discovered presently that the trouble was about some stolen money. Lots of people wouldn't believe that he was guilty at first, but so many things pointed his way that finally they had to. The case was about to be brought to trial when one night Dan suddenly disappeared as if the sea had swallowed him, and nothing had ever been heard from him since. Judge Huntingdon said it was a pity, for even if he was guilty he thought he could have got him off, there being nothing but circumstantial evidence.

Well, it nearly killed his father and mother and Emmett Potter, too.

It came out then that Emmett was engaged to Belle. For nearly a year he grieved about Dan's disappearance. Seems he took it to heart so that he couldn't bear to do any of the things they'd always done together or go to the old places. Belle had her wedding dress made and thought if she could once get him down to Truro to live, he'd brace up and get over it.

They had settled on the day, when one wild, stormy night word came that a vessel was pounding itself to pieces off Peaked Hill Bar, and the life-saving crew was starting to the rescue. Emmett lit out to see it, and when something happened to the breeches buoy so they couldn't use it, he was the first

to answer when the call came for volunteers to man a boat to put out to them. He would have had a medal if he'd lived to wear it, for he saved five lives that night. But he lost his own the last time he climbed up on the vessel. Nobody knew whether it was a rope gave way or whether his fingers were so nearly frozen he couldn't hold on, but he dropped into that raging sea, and his body was washed up on the beach next day.

Georgina listened, horrified.

"And Belle with her wedding dress all ready," said Cousin Mehitable with a husky sigh.

"What became of her?" asked the minister's wife.

"Oh, she's still living here in town, but it blighted her whole life in a way, although she was just in her teens when it happened. It helped her to bear up, knowing he'd died such a hero. Some of the town people put up a tombstone to his memory, with a beautiful inscription on it that the summer people go to see, almost as much as the landing place of the Pilgrims. She'll be true to his memory always, and it's something beautiful to see her devotion to Emmett's father. She calls him "Father" Potter, and is always doing things for him. He's that old net-mender who lives alone out on the edge of town near the cranberry bogs."

Cousin Mehitable took up the tale:

"I'll never forget if I live to be a hundred, what I saw on my way home the night after Emmett was

drowned. I was living here then, you know. I was passing through Fishburn Court, and I thought I'd go in and speak a word to Mr. Darcy, knowing how fond he'd always been of Emmett on account of Dan and him being such friends. I went across that sandy place they call the Court, to the row of cottages at the end. But I didn't see anything until I had opened the Darcy's gate and stepped into the yard. The house sits sideways to the Court, you know.

"The yellow blind was pulled down over the front window, but the lamp threw a shadow on it, plain as a photograph. It was the shadow of the old man, sitting there with his arms flung out across the table, and his head bowed down on them. I was just hesitating, whether to knock or to slip away, when I heard him groan, and sort of cry out, "Oh, my Danny! My Danny! If only you could have gone *that* way."

Barbara, hearing a muffled sob behind her, turned to see the tears running down Georgina's face. The next instant she was up, and with her arms around the child, was gently pushing her ahead of her out of the room, into the hall. With the door shut behind her she said soothingly:

"Barby didn't know they were going to tell such unhappy stories, darling. I shouldn't have let you stay."

"But I *want* to know," sobbed Georgina. "When people you love have trouble you ought to know, so's

to be kinder to them. Oh, Barby, I'm so sorry I ever was saucy to him. And I wish I hadn't teased his cats. I tied paper bags on all of John Darcy and Mary Darcy's paws, and he said I made old Y-yellownose n-nervous, tickling his ears——"

Barbara stopped the sobbing confessions with a kiss and took Georgina's jacket from the hat-rack.

"Here," she said. "It's bad for you to sit in the house all day and listen to grown people talk. Slip into this and run outdoors with your skipping rope a while. Uncle Darcy has had very great trouble, but he's learned to bear it like a hero, and nothing would make him grieve more than to know that any shadow of his sorrow was making you unhappy. The way for you to help him most is to be as bright and jolly as you can, and to *tease* his old cats once in a while."

Georgina looked up through her tears, her dimples all showing, and threw her arms around her adoringly.

"What a funny mother you are, Barby. Not a bit like the ones in books."

A cold wind was blowing the fog away. She raced up and down the beach for a long time, and when she came back it was with red cheeks and ruffled curls. Having left the company in tears she did not like to venture back for fear of the remarks

which might be made. So she crossed the hall and stood in the door of the guest chamber, considering what to do next. Its usual chill repellance had been changed into something inviting by the wood fire on the hearth, and on the bed where the guests had deposited their wraps lay an array of millinery which drew her irresistibly.

It was a huge four-poster bed which one could mount only by the aid of a set of bedside steps, and so high that the valance, draped around it like a skirt, would have reached from her neck to her heels had it been draped on her. It was a chintz valance with birds of paradise patterned on its pink background, and there was pink silk quilled into the quaint tester overhead, reminding her of old Jeremy's favorite quill dahlias.

Usually when she went into this room which was seldom opened, she mounted the steps to gaze up at that fascinating pink loveliness. Also she walked around the valance, counting its birds of paradise. She did not do so to-day. She knew from many previous countings that there were exactly eighty-seven and a half of those birds. The joining seam cut off all but the magnificent tail of what would have been the eighty-eighth.

Mounting the steps she leaned over, careful not to touch the crocheted counterpane, which Tippy always treated as if it were something sacred, and

looked at the hats spread out upon it. Then she laid daring fingers on Cousin Mehitable's bonnet. It was a temptation to know what she would look like if she should grow up to be a widow and have to wear an imposing head-gear like that with a white ruche in front and a long black veil floating down behind. The next instant she was tying the strings under her chin.

It made her look like such an odd little dwarf of a woman that she stuck out her tongue at her reflection in the mirror. The grimace was so comical, framed by the stately bonnet, that Georgina was delighted. She twisted her face another way and was still more amused at results. Wholly forgetful of the fact that it was a mourning bonnet, she went on making faces at herself until the sound of voices suddenly growing louder, told her that the door across the hall had opened. Someone was coming across.

There was no time to take off the bonnet. With a frightened gasp she dived under the bed, with it still on, her heels disappearing just as someone came into the room. The bed was so high she could easily sit upright under it, but she was so afraid that a cough or a sneeze might betray her, that she drew up her knees and sat with her face pressed against them hard. The long veil shrouded her shoulders. She felt that she would surely die if

anyone should notice that the bonnet was gone, or happen to lift the valance and find her sitting there with it on her head. Then she forgot her fear in listening to what Cousin Mehitable was saying.

CHAPTER VII

"THE TISHBITE"

COUSIN MEHITABLE was speaking to Mrs. Triplett, who seemed to be searching through bureau drawers for something. Georgina could tell what she was doing from the sounds which reached her. These drawers always stuck, and had to be jerked violently until the mirror rattled.

"Oh, don't bother about it, Maria. I just made an excuse of wanting to see it, because I knew you always kept it in here, and I wanted to get you off by yourself for a minute's talk with you alone. Since I've been in town I've heard so much about Justin and the way he is doing that I wanted to ask somebody who knew and who could tell me the straight of it. What's this about his leaving the service and going junketing off to the interior of China on some mission of his own? Jane tells me he got a year's leave of absence from the Navy just to study up some outlandish disease that attacks the sailors in foreign ports. She says why should he take a whole year out of the best part of his life to poke around the huts of dirty heathen to find out the kind of microbe that's eating 'em? He'd ought to think of

Barbara and what's eating her heart out. I've taken a great fancy to that girl, and I'd like to give Justin a piece of my mind. It probably wouldn't do a bit of good though. He always was peculiar."

Georgina could hear only a few words of the answer because Tippy had her head in the closet now, reaching for the box on the top shelf. She stopped her search as soon as Cousin Mehitable said that, and the two of them went over to the fire and talked in low tones for a few minutes, leaning against the mantel. Georgina heard a word now and then. Several times it was her own name. Finally, in a louder tone Cousin Mehitable said:

"Well, I wanted to know, and I was sure you could tell me if anyone could."

They went back across the hall to the other guests. The instant they were gone Georgina crawled out from under the bed with the big bonnet cocked over one eye. Then she scudded down the hall and up the back stairs. She knew the company would be going soon, and she would be expected to bid them goodbye if she were there. She didn't want Cousin Mehitable to kiss her again. She didn't like her any more since she had called her father "peculiar."

She wandered aimlessly about for a few minutes, then pushed the door open into Mrs. Triplett's room. It was warm and cozy in there for a small fire still burned in the little drum stove. She opened the front damper to make it burn faster, and the light shone

out in four long rays which made a flickering in the room. She sat down on the floor in front of it and began to wonder.

"What did Cousin Mehitable mean by something eating Barby's heart out?" Did people die of it? She had read of the Spartan youth who let the fox gnaw his vitals under his cloak and never showed, even by the twitching of a muscle, that he was in pain. Of course, she knew that no live thing was tearing at her mother's heart, but what if something that she couldn't understand was hurting her darling Barby night and day and she was bravely hiding it from the world like the Spartan youth?

Did *all* grown people have troubles? It had seemed such a happy world until to-day, and now all at once she had heard about Dan Darcy and Belle Triplett. Nearly everyone whom the guests talked about had borne some unhappiness, and even her own father was "peculiar." She wished she hadn't found out all these things. A great weight seemed to settle down upon her.

Thinking of Barbara in the light of what she had just learned she recalled that she often looked sorry and disappointed, especially after the postman had come and gone without leaving a letter. Only this morning Tippy had said—could it be she thought something was wrong and was trying to comfort her?

"Justin always was a poor hand for writing letters. Many a time I've heard the Judge scolding

and stewing around because he hadn't heard from him when he was away at school. Letter writing came so easy to the Judge he couldn't understand why Justin shirked it so."

Then Georgina thought of Belle in the light of what she had just learned. Belle had carried her around in her arms when she was first brought to live in this old gray house by the sea. She had made a companion of her whenever she came to visit her Aunt Maria, and Georgina had admired her because she was so pretty and blonde and gentle, and enjoyed her because she was always so willing to do whatever Georgina wished. And now to think that instead of being the like-everybody-else kind of a young lady she seemed, she was like a heroine in a book who had lived through trouble which would "blight her whole life."

Sitting there on the floor with her knees drawn up and her chin resting on them, Georgina looked into the fire through the slits of the damper and thought and thought. Then she looked out through the little square window-panes across the wind-swept dunes. It did not seem like summer with the sky all overcast with clouds. It was more like the end of a day in the early autumn. Life seemed overcast, too.

Presently through a rift in the sky an early star stole out, and she made a wish on it. That was one of the things Belle had taught her. She started to wish that Barby might be happy. But before the

whispered verse had entirely passed her lips she stopped to amend it, adding Uncle Darcy's name and Belle's. Then she stopped again, overcome by the knowledge of all the woe in the world, and gathering all the universe into her generous little heart she exclaimed earnestly:

"I wish *everybody in the world could be happy.*"

Having made the wish, fervently, almost fiercely, in her intense desire to set things right, she scrambled to her feet. There was another thing that Belle had told her which she must do.

"If you open the Bible and it chances to be at a chapter beginning with the words, 'It came to pass,' the wish will come true without fail."

Taking Tippy's Bible from the stand beside the bed, she opened it at random, then carried it over to the stove in order to scan the pages by the firelight streaming through the damper. The book opened at First Kings, seventeenth chapter. She held it directly in the broad rays examining the pages anxiously. There was only that one chapter head on either page, and alas, its opening words were not "it came to pass." What she read with a sinking heart was:

"And Elijah the Tishbite."

Now Georgina hadn't the slightest idea what a Tishbite was, but it sounded as if it were something dreadful. Somehow it is a thousand times worse to be scared by a fear which is not understood than by

one which is familiar. Suddenly she felt as bewildered and frightened as she had on that morning long ago, when Jeremy's teeth went flying into the fire. The happiness of her whole little world seemed to be going to pieces.

Throwing herself across the foot of Tippy's bed she crawled under the afghan thrown over it, even burrowing her head beneath it in order to shut out the dreadful things closing down on her. It had puzzled and frightened her to know that something was eating Barby's heart out, even in a figurative way, and now the word "Tishbite" filled her with a vague sense of helplessness and impending disaster.

Barbara, coming upstairs to hunt her after the guests were gone, found her sound asleep with the afghan still over her head. She folded it gently back from the flushed face, not intending to waken her, but Georgina's eyes opened and after a bewildered stare around the room she sat up, remembering. She had wakened to a world of trouble. Somehow it did not seem quite so bad with Barbara standing over her, smiling. When she went downstairs a little later, freshly washed and brushed, the Tishbite rolled out of her thoughts as a fog lifts when the sun shines.

But it came back at bedtime, when having said her prayers, she joined her voice with Barbara's in the hymn that had been her earliest lullaby. It was a custom never omitted. It always closed the day for her:

"Eternal Father, strong to save,
Whose arm doth bind the restless wave,
Oh, hear us when we cry to thee
For those in peril on the sea."

As they sang she stole an anxious glance at Barbara several times. Then she made up her mind that Cousin Mehitable was mistaken. If her father were "peculiar," Barby wouldn't have that sweet look on her face when she sang that prayer for him. If he were making her unhappy she wouldn't be singing it at all. She wouldn't care whether he was protected or not "from rock and tempest, fire and foe."

And yet, after Barby had gone downstairs and the sound of the piano came softly up from below—another bedtime custom, Georgina began thinking again about those whispering voices which she had heard as she sat under the bed, behind the bird-of-paradise valance. More than ever before the music suggested someone waiting for a ship which never came home, or fog bells on a lonely shore.

Nearly a week went by before Richard made his first visit to the old gray house at the end of town. He came with the Towncrier, carrying his bell, and keeping close to his side for the first few minutes. Then he found the place far more interesting than the bungalow. Georgina took him all over it, from the garret where she played on rainy days to the seat up in the willow, where standing in its highest

crotch one could look clear across the Cape to the Atlantic. They made several plans for their treasure-quest while up in the willow. They could see a place off towards Wood End Lighthouse which looked like one of the pirate places Uncle Darcy had described in one of his tales.

Barby had lemonade and cake waiting for them when they came down, and when she talked to him it wasn't at all in the way the ladies did who came to see his Aunt Letty, as if they were talking merely to be gracious and kind to a strange little boy in whom they had no interest. Barby gave his ear a tweak and said with a smile that made him feel as if they had known each other always:

"Oh, the good times I've had with boys just your size. I always played with my brother Eddy's friends. Boys make such good chums. I've often thought how much Georgina misses that I had."

Presently Georgina took him out to the see-saw, where Captain Kidd persisted in riding on Richard's end of the plank.

"That's exactly the way my Uncle Eddy's terrier used to do back in Kentucky when I visited there one summer," she said, after the plank was adjusted so as to balance them properly. "Only he barked all the time he was riding. But he was fierce because Uncle Eddy fed him gunpowder."

"What did he do that for?"

"To keep him from being gun-shy. And Uncle

Eddy ate some, too, one time when he was little, because the colored stable boy told him it would make him game."

"Did it?"

"I don't know whether that did or not. Something did though, for he's the gamest man I know."

Richard considered this a moment and then said:

"I wonder what it would do to Captain Kidd if I fed him some."

"Let's try it!" exclaimed Georgina, delighted with the suggestion. "There's some hanging up in the old powder-horn over the dining-room mantel. You have to give it to 'em in milk. Wait a minute."

Jumping from the see-saw after giving fair warning, she ran to one of the side windows.

"Barby," she called. "I'm going to give Captain Kidd some milk."

Barbara turned from her conversation with Uncle Darcy to say:

"Very well, if you can get it yourself. But be careful not to disturb the pans that haven't been skimmed. Tippy wouldn't like it."

"I know what to get it out of," called Georgina, "out of the blue pitcher."

Richard watched while she opened the refrigerator door and poured some milk into a saucer.

"Carry it in and put it on the kitchen table," she bade him, "while I get the powder."

When he followed her into the dining-room she

was upon a chair, reaching for the old powder horn, which hung on a hook under the firearm that had done duty in the battle of Lexington. Richard wanted to get his hands on it, and was glad when she could not pull out the wooden plug which stopped the small end of the horn. She turned it over to him to open. He peered into it, then shook it.

"There isn't more than a spoonful left in it," he said.

"Well, gunpowder is so strong you don't need much. You know just a little will make a gun go off. It mightn't be safe to feed him much. Pour some out in your hand and drop it in the milk."

Richard slowly poured a small mound out into the hollow of his hand, and passed the horn back to her, then went to the kitchen whistling for Captain Kidd. Not all of the powder went into the milk, however. The last bit he swallowed himself, after looking at it long and thoughtfully.

At the same moment, Georgina, before putting back the plug, paused, looked all around, and poured out a few grains into her own hand. If the Tishbite was going to do anybody any harm, it would be well to be prepared. She had just hastily swallowed it and was hanging the horn back in place, when Richard returned.

"He lapped up the last drop as if he liked it," he reported. "Now we'll see what happens."

CHAPTER VIII

THE TELEGRAM THAT TOOK BARBY AWAY

THE painting of Richard's portrait interfered with the quest for buried treasure from day to day; but unbeknown either to artist or model, the dreams of that quest helped in the fashioning of the picture. In the preliminary sittings in the studio at home Richard's father found it necessary always to begin with some exhortation such as:

"Now, Dicky, this has *got* to be more than just a 'Study of a Boy's Head.' I want to show by the expression of your face that it is an illustration of that poem, 'A boy's will is the wind's will, and the thoughts of youth are long, long thoughts.' Chase that Binney Rogers and his gang out of your mind for a while, can't you, and think of something beside shinny and the hokey-pokey man."

So far the portrait was satisfactory in that it was a remarkably good likeness of an unusually good-looking boy, but it was of a boy who seemed to be alertly listening for such things as Binney's cat-call, signaling him from the alley. Here by the sea there was no need for such exhortations. No sooner was

he seated before the easel in the loft which served as a studio, with its barn-like, double doors thrown open above the water, than the rapt expression which his father coveted, crept into his dark eyes. They grew big and dreamy, following the white sails across the harbor. He was planning the secret expedition he and Georgina intended to undertake, just as soon as the portrait was finished.

There were many preparations to make for it. They would have to secrete tools and provisions; and in a book from which Georgina read aloud whenever there was opportunity, were descriptions of various rites that it were well to perform. One was to sacrifice a black cock, and sprinkle its blood upon the spot before beginning to dig. Richard did not question why this should be done. The book recommended it as a practice which had been followed by some very famous treasure hunters. If at times a certain wide-awake and calculating gleam suddenly dispelled the dreaminess of expression in which his father was exulting, it was because a black Orpington rooster which daily strayed from a nearby cottage to the beach below the studio window, chose that moment to crow. Richard had marked that black cock for the sacrifice. It was lordly enough to bring success upon any enterprise.

In the meantime, as soon as his duties as model were over each morning, he was out of the studio with a whoop and up the beach as hard as he could

run to the Huntingdon house. By the time he reached it he was no longer the artist's only son, hedged about with many limitations which belonged to that distinction. He was "Dare-devil Dick, the Dread Destroyer," and Georgina was "Gory George, the Menace of the Main."

Together they commanded a brigantine of their own. Passers-by saw only an old sailboat anchored at the deserted and rotting wharf up nearest the breakwater. But the passers-by who saw only that failed to see either Dare-devil Dick or Gory George. They saw, instead, two children whose fierce mustachios were the streakings of a burnt match, whose massive hoop ear-rings were the brass rings from a curtain pole, whose faithful following of the acts of Captain Quelch and other piratical gentlemen was only the mimicry of play.

But Barbara knew how real they were, from the spotted handkerchief tied around the "bunged eye" of Dare-devil Dick, under his evil-looking slouch hat, to the old horse pistol buckled to his belt. Gory George wore the same. And Barbara knew what serious business it was to them, even more serious than the affairs of eating and drinking.

Tippy scolded when she found that her half-pint bottles which she kept especially for cream had been smuggled away in the hold of the brigantine. But without bottles how could one give a realistic touch to the singing of "Yo ho, and the rum below"?

And Tippy thought it was heathenish for Barbara to let Georgina dress up in some little knickerbockers and a roundabout which had been stored away with other clothes worn by Justin as a small boy. But her disapproval was beyond words when Barbara herself appeared at the back door one morning, so cleverly disguised as a gypsy, that Mrs. Triplett grudgingly handed out some cold biscuits before she discovered the imposition. The poor she was glad to feed, but she had no use for an impudent, strolling gypsy.

"Don't be cross, Tippy," pleaded Barbara, laughing till the tears came. "I *had* to do it. I can't bear to feel that Georgina is growing away from me—that she is satisfied to leave me out of her games. Since she's so taken up with that little Richard Moreland I don't seem as necessary to her as I used to be. And I can't bear that, Tippy, when I've always been first in everything with her. She's so necessary to me."

Mrs. Triplett made no answer. She felt that she couldn't do justice to the occasion. She doubted if the Pilgrim monument itself could, even if it were to stretch itself up to its full height and deliver a lecture on the dignity of motherhood. She wondered what the Mayflower mothers would have thought if they could have met this modern one on the beach, with face stained brown, playacting that she was a beggar of a gypsy. How could she hope to be one

of those written of in Proverbs—"Her children rise up and call her blessed. Her own works praise her in the gates."

Tippy ate her dinner alone that day, glancing grimly through the open window from time to time to the sand dunes back of the house, where an old hag of a gypsy in a short red dress with a gay bandanna knotted over her head, broiled bacon and boiled corn over a smoky campfire; and two swaggering villains who smelled of tar and codfish (because of the old net which half-way filled the brigantine), sucked the very cobs when the corn was eaten from them, forever registering that feast high above all other feasts in the tablet of blessed memories.

The interruption to all this came as unexpectedly as a clap of thunder from a clear sky. A messenger boy on a wheel whirled up to the front gate with a telegram. Tippy signed for it, not wanting the boy to see Barbara in such outlandish dress, then carried it out to the picnickers. She held it under her apron until she reached them. Telegrams always spelled trouble to Mrs. Triplett, but Barbara took this one from her with a smiling thank you, without rising from her seat on the sand. Her father often telegraphed instead of writing when away on his vacations, and she knew he was up at a lake resort in Michigan, at an Editors' Convention. Telegrams had always been pleasant things in her experience.

But as she tore this open and read she turned pale even under her brown stain.

"It's papa," she gasped. "Hurt in an automobile accident. They don't say how bad—just hurt. And he wants me. I must take the first train."

She looked up at Mrs. Triplett helplessly, not even making an effort to rise from the sand, she was so dazed and distressed by the sudden summons. It was the first time she had ever had the shock of bad news. It was the first time she had ever been called upon to act for herself in such an emergency, and she felt perfectly numb, mind and body. Tippy's voice sounded a mile away when she said:

"You can catch the boat. It's an hour till the *Dorothy Bradford* starts back to Boston."

Still Barbara sat limp and powerless, as one sits in a nightmare.

Georgina gave a choking gasp as two awful words rose up in her throat and stuck there. *"The Tish-bite."* Whatever that mysterious horror might be, plainly its evil workings had begun.

"Tut!" exclaimed Tippy, pulling Barbara to her feet. "Keep your head. You'll have to begin scrubbing that brown paint off your face if you expect to reach the boat on time."

Automatically Georgina responded to that "tut" as if it were the old challenge of the powder horn. No matter how she shivered she must show what

brave stuff she was made of. Even with that awful foreboding clutching at her heart like an iron hand and Barby about to leave her, she mustn't show one sign of her distress.

It was well that Georgina had learned to move briskly in her long following after Tippy, else she could not have been of such service in this emergency. Her eyes were blurred with tears as she hurried up to the garret for suitcase and satchel, and down the hall to look up numbers in the telephone directory. But it was a comfort even in the midst of her distress to feel that she could take such an important part in the preparations, that Tippy trusted her to do the necessary telephoning, and to put up a lunch for Barby without dictating either the messages or the contents of the lunch-box.

When Mr. James Milford called up, immediately after Richard had raced home with the news, and offered to take Mrs. Huntingdon to the boat in his machine, he thought it was Mrs. Huntingdon herself who answered him. The trembling voice seemed only natural under the circumstances. He would have smiled could he have seen the pathetic little face uplifted towards the receiver, the quivering lip still adorned with the fierce mustachios of Gory George, in strange contrast to the soft curls hanging over her shoulders now that they were no longer hidden by a piratical hat. She had forgotten that she was in knickerbockers instead of skirts, and that the old

horse-pistol was still at her belt, until Barbara caught her to her at parting with a laugh that turned into a sob, looking for a spot on her face clean enough to kiss.

It was all over so soon—the machine whirling up to the door and away again to stop at the bank an instant for the money which Georgina had telephoned to have waiting, and then on to the railroad wharf where the *Dorothy Bradford* had already sounded her first warning whistle. Georgina had no time to realize what was actually happening until it was over. She climbed up into the mammoth willow tree in the corner of the yard to watch for the steamboat. It would come into view in a few minutes as it ploughed majestically through the water towards the light-house.

Then desolation fell upon her. She had never realized until that moment how dear her mother was to her. Then the thought came to her, suppose it was Barby who had been hurt in an accident, and she Georgina, was hurrying to her as Barby was hurrying to grandfather Shirley, unknowing what awaited her at the journey's end. For a moment she forgot her own unhappiness at being left behind, in sympathetic understanding of her mother's distress. She wasn't going to think about her part of it she told herself, she was going to be so brave——

Then her glance fell on the "holiday tree."

The holiday tree was a little evergreen of Barby's

christening if not of her planting. For every gala day in the year it bore strange fruit, no matter what the season. At Hallowe'en it was as gay with jack-o-lanterns and witches' caps as if the pixies themselves had decorated it. On Washington's birthday each branch was tipped with a flag and a cherry tart. On the fourteenth of February it was hung with valentines, and at Easter she was always sure of finding a candy rabbit or two perched among its branches and nests of colored eggs. It seemed to be at its best at Christmas, but it was when it took its turns at birthday celebrations that it was most wonderful. Then it blossomed with little glass lanterns of every color, glowing like red and green and golden stars. Last year it had borne a great toy ship with all sails set, and nine "surprise" oranges, round, yellow boxes, each containing a gift, because she was nine years old. In just two more days she would be ten, and Barby gone!

At that instant the boat whistle sounded long and deep, sending its melodious boom across the water. It seemed to strike some chord in the very center of her being, and make her feel as if something inside were sinking down and down and down. The sensation was sickening. It grew worse as the boat steamed away. She stood up on a limb to watch it. Smaller and smaller it seemed, leaving only a long plume of smoke in its wake as it disappeared around Long Point. Then even the smoke faded, and a for-

lorn little figure, strangely at variance with the fierce pirate suit, she crumpled up in the crotch of the willow, her face hidden in her elbow, and began to sob piteously: "Oh, Barby! Barby!"

CHAPTER IX

THE BIRTHDAY PRISM

THE Towncrier, passing along the street on an early morning trip to the bakery, stopped at the door of the antique shop, for a word with Mrs. Yates, the lady who kept it. She wanted him to "cry" an especial bargain sale of old lamps later in the week. That is how he happened to be standing in the front door when the crash came in the rear of the shop, and it was because he was standing there that the crash came.

Because Mrs. Yates was talking to him she couldn't be at the back door when the fish-boy came with the fish, and nobody being there to take it the instant he knocked, the boy looked in and threw it down on the table nearest the door. And because the fish was left to lie there a moment while Mrs. Yates finished her conversation, the cat, stretched out on the high window ledge above the table, decided to have his breakfast without waiting to be called. He was an enormous cat by the name of "Grandpa," and because he was old and ponderous, and no longer light on his feet, when he leaped from the window-sill he came down clumsily in the middle of the very

table full of the old lamps which were set aside for the bargain sale.

Of course, it was the biggest and fanciest lamp in the lot that was broken—a tall one with a frosted glass shade and a row of crystal prisms dangling around the bowl of it. It toppled over on to a pair of old brass andirons, smashing into a thousand pieces. Bits of glass flew in every direction, and "Grandpa," his fur electrified by his fright until he looked twice his natural size, shot through the door as if fired from a cannon, and was seen no more that morning.

Naturally, Mrs. Yates hurried to the back of the store to see what had happened, and Mr. Darcy, following, picked up from the wreck the only piece of the lamp not shattered to bits by the fall. It was one of the prisms, which in some miraculous way had survived the crash, a beautiful crystal pendant without a single nick or crack.

He picked it up and rubbed his coat sleeve down each of its three sides, and when he held it up to the light it sent a ripple of rainbows dancing across the shop. He watched them, pleased as a child; and when Mrs. Yates, loud in her complaints of Grandpa, came with broom and dustpan to sweep up the litter, he bargained with her for the prism.

That is how he happened to have an offering for Georgina's birthday when he reached the house a couple of hours later, not knowing that it was her

birthday. Nobody had remembered it, Barby being gone.

It seemed to Georgina the forlornest day she had ever opened her eyes upon. The very fact that it was gloriously sunny with a delicious summer breeze ruffling the harbor and sending the white sails scudding along like wings, made her feel all the more desolate. She was trying her best to forget what day it was, but there wasn't much to keep her mind off the subject. Even opportunities for helping Tippy were taken away, for Belle had come to stay during Barby's absence, and she insisted on doing what Georgina otherwise would have done.

If Barby had been at home there would have been no piano practice on such a gala occasion as a tenth birthday. There would have been no time for it in the program of joyful happenings. But because time dragged, Georgina went to her scales and five-finger exercises as usual. With the hour-glass on the piano beside her, she practised not only her accustomed time, till the sand had run half through, but until all but a quarter of it had slipped down. Then she sauntered listlessly out into the dining-room and stood by one of the open windows, looking out through the wire screen into the garden.

On any other day she would have found entertainment in the kitchen listening to Belle and Mrs. Triplett. Belle seemed doubly interesting now that she had heard of the unused wedding dress and the sorrow that would "blight her whole life." But

Georgina did not want anyone to see how bitterly she was disappointed.

Just outside, so close to the window that she could have reached out and touched it had it not been for the screen, stood the holiday tree. It had held out its laden arms to her on so many festal occasions that Georgina had grown to feel that it took a human interest in all her celebrations. To see it standing bare now, like any ordinary tree, made her feel that her last friend was indifferent. Nobody cared. Nobody was glad that she was in the world. In spite of all she could do to check them, two big tears welled up and rolled down her cheeks; then another and another. She lifted up the hem of her dress to wipe them away, and as she did so Uncle Darcy came around the house.

He looked in at the open window, then asked: "Weather a bit squally, hey? Better put into port and tie up till storm's over. Let your Uncle Darcy have a hand at the helm. Come out here, Barby, and let's talk it over on the door-step."

There was something so heartening in the cheery voice that Georgina made one more dab at her eyes with the hem of her dress skirt, then dropped it and went out through the screen door to join him on the steps which led down into the garden. At first she was loath to confess the cause of her tears. She felt ashamed of being caught crying simply because no one had remembered the date. It wasn't that she

wanted presents, she sobbed. It was that she wanted someone to be glad that she'd been born and it was so lonesome without Barby——

In the midst of her reluctant confession Mr. Darcy bethought himself of the prism in his pocket.

"Here," he said, drawing it out. "Take this and put a rainbow around your troubles. It's a sort of magic glass. When you look through it, it shows you things you can't see with your ordinary eyes. Look what it does to the holiday tree."

There was a long-drawn breath of amazement from Georgina as she held the prism to her eyes and looked through it at the tree.

"Oh! Oh! It *does* put a rainbow around every branch and every little tuft of green needles. It's even lovelier than the colored lanterns were. Isn't it wonderful? It puts a rainbow around the whole outdoors."

Her gaze went from the grape arbor to the back garden gate. Then she jumped up and started around the house, the old man following, and smiling over each enthusiastic "oh" she uttered, as the prism showed her new beauty at every step. He was pleased to have been the source of her new pleasure.

"It's like looking into a different world," she cried, as she reached the kitchen door, and eagerly turned the prism from one object to another. Mrs. Triplett was scowling intently over the task of trying to turn the lid of a glass jar which refused to budge.

"Oh, it even puts a rainbow around Tippy's frown," Georgina cried excitedly. Then she ran to hold the prism over Belle's eyes.

"Look what Uncle Darcy brought me for my birthday. See how it puts a rainbow around every blessed thing, even the old black pots and pans!"

In showing it to Tippy she discovered a tiny hole in the end of the prism by which it had been hung from the lamp, and she ran upstairs to find a piece of ribbon to run through it. When she came down again, the prism hanging from her neck by a long pink ribbon, Uncle Darcy greeted her with a new version of the Banbury Cross song:

"Rings on her fingers and ribbon of rose,
She shall have rainbows wherever she goes."

"That's even better than having music wherever you go," answered Georgina, whirling around on her toes. Then she stopped in a listening attitude, hearing the postman.

When she came back from the front door with only a magazine her disappointment was keen, but she said bravely:

"Of course, I *knew* there couldn't be a letter from Barby this soon. She couldn't get there till last night —but just for a minute I couldn't help hoping—but I didn't mind it half so much, Uncle Darcy, when I

looked at the postman through the prism. Even his whiskers were blue and red and yellow."

That afternoon a little boat went dipping up and down across the waves. It was *The Betsey,* with Uncle Darcy pulling at the oars and Georgina as passenger. Lifting the prism which still hung from her neck by the pink ribbon, she looked out upon what seemed to be an enchanted harbor. It was filled with a fleet of rainbows. Every sail was outlined with one, every mast edged with lines of red and gold and blue. Even the gray wharves were tinged with magical color, and the water itself, to her reverent thought, suggested the "sea of glass mingled with fire," which is pictured as one of the glories of the New Jerusalem.

"Isn't it *wonderful,* Uncle Darcy?" she asked in a hushed, awed tone. "It's just like a miracle the way this bit of glass changes the whole world. Isn't it?"

Before he could answer, a shrill whistle sounded near at hand. They were passing the boathouse on the beach below the Green Stairs. Looking up they saw Richard, hanging out of the open doors of the loft, waving to them. Georgina stood up in the boat and beckoned, but he shook his head, pointing backward with his thumb into the studio, and disconsolately shrugged his shoulders.

"He wants to go *so* bad!" exclaimed Georgina. "Seems as if his father's a mighty slow painter.

Maybe if you'd ask him the way you did before, Uncle Darcy, he'd let Richard off this one more time —being my birthday, you know."

She looked at him with the bewitching smile which he usually found impossible to resist, but this time he shook his head.

"No, I don't want him along to-day. I've brought you out here to show you something and have a little talk with you alone. Maybe I ought to wait till you're older before I say what I want to say, but at my time of life I'm liable to slip off without much warning, and I don't want to go till I've said it to you."

Georgina put down her prism to stare at him in eager-eyed wonder. She was curious to know what he could show her out here on the water, and what he wanted to tell her that was as important as his solemn words implied.

"Wait till we come to it," he said, answering the unspoken question in her eyes. And Georgina, who dearly loved dramatic effects in her own story-telling, waited for something—she knew not what—to burst upon her expectant sight.

They followed the line of the beach for some time, dodging in between motor boats and launches, under the high railroad wharf and around the smaller ones where the old fish-houses stood. Past groups of children, playing in the sand they went, past artists

sketching under their white umbrellas, past gardens gay with bright masses of color, past drying nets spread out on the shore.

Presently Uncle Darcy stopped rowing and pointed across a vacant strip of beach between two houses, to one on the opposite side of the street.

"There it is," he announced. "That's what I wanted to show you."

Georgina followed the direction of his pointing finger.

"Oh, that!" she said in a disappointed tone. "I've seen that all my life. It's nothing but the Figurehead House."

She was looking at a large white house with a portico over the front door, on the roof of which portico was perched half of the wooden figure of a woman. It was of heroic size, head thrown back as if looking off to sea, and with a green wreath in its hands. Weather-beaten and discolored, it was not an imposing object at first glance, and many a jibe and laugh it had called forth from passing tourists.

Georgina's disappointment showed in her face.

"I know all about that," she remarked. "Mrs. Tupman told me herself. She calls it the Lady of Mystery. She said that years and years ago a schooner put out from this town on a whaling cruise, and was gone more than a year. When it was crossing the equator, headed for home, the look-out at

the masthead saw a strange object in the water that looked like a woman afloat. The Captain gave orders to lower the boats, and when they did so they found this figurehead. She said it must have come from the prow of some great clipper in the East India trade. They were in the Indian Ocean, you know.

"There had been some frightful storms and afterwards they heard of many wrecks. This figurehead was so long they had to cut it in two to get it into the hold of the vessel. They brought it home and set it up there over the front door, and they call it the Lady of Mystery, because they said 'from whence that ship came, what was its fate and what was its destination will always be shrouded in mystery.' And Mrs. Tupman said that a famous artist looked at it once and said it was probably the work of a Spanish artist, and that from the pose of its head and the wreath in its hands he was sure it was intended to represent Hope. Was *that* what you were going to tell me?"

The old man had rested on his oars while she hurried through this tale, with a mischievous twinkle in her eyes, as if she thought she was forestalling him. Now he picked them up again and began rowing out into the harbor.

"That was a part of it," he admitted, "but that's only the part that the whole town knows. That old

figurehead has a meaning for me that nobody else that's living knows about. That's what I want to pass on to you."

He rowed several minutes more before he said slowly, with a wistful tenderness coming into his dim old eyes as he looked at her:

"Georgina, I don't suppose anybody's ever told you about the troubles I've had. They wouldn't talk about such things to a child like you. Maybe I shouldn't, now; but when I saw how disappointed you were this morning, I said to myself, 'If she's old enough to feel trouble that way, she's old enough to understand and to be helped by hearing about mine.' "

It seemed hard for him to go on, for again he paused, looking off toward the lighthouse in the distance. Then he said slowly, in a voice that shook at times:

"Once—I had a boy—that I set all my hopes on—just as a man puts all his cargo into one vessel; and nobody was ever prouder than I was, when that little craft went sailing along with the best of them. I used to look at him and think, *'Danny'll* weather the seas no matter how rough they are, and he'll bring up in the harbor I'm hoping he'll reach, with all flags flying.' And then—something went wrong——"

The tremulous voice broke. "My little ship went down—all my precious cargo lost——"

Another and a longer pause. In it Georgina

seemed to hear Cousin Mehitable's husky voice, half whispering:

"And the lamp threw a shadow on the yellow blind, plain as a photograph. The shadow of an old man sitting with his arms flung out across the table and his head bowed on them. And he was groaning, 'Oh, my Danny! My Danny! If you could only have gone that way.'"

For a moment Georgina felt the cruel hurt of his grief as if the pain had stabbed her own heart. The old man went on:

"If it had only been any other kind of a load, anything but *disgrace,* I could have carried it without flinching. But *that,* it seemed I just couldn't face. Only the good Lord knows how I lived through those first few weeks. Then your grandfather Huntingdon came to me. He was always a good friend. And he asked me to row him out here on the water. When we passed the Figurehead House he pointed up at that head. It was all white and fair in those days, before the paint wore off. And he said, 'Dan'l Darcy, *as long as a man keeps Hope at the prow he keeps afloat.* As soon as he drops it he goes to pieces and down to the bottom, the way that ship did when it lost its figurehead. You mustn't let go, Dan'l. You *must* keep Hope at the prow.

" 'Somewhere in God's universe either in this world or another your boy is alive and still your son. You've got to go on hoping that if he's innocent his

name will be cleared of this disgrace, and if he's guilty he'll wipe out the old score against him some way and make good.'

"And then he gave me a line to live by. A line he said that had been written by a man who was stone blind, and hadn't anything to look forward to all the rest of his life but groping in the dark. He said he'd not

" 'Bate a jot
Of heart or hope, but still bear up and steer
Right onward.'

"At first it didn't seem to mean anything to me, but he made me say it after him as if it were a sort of promise, and I've been saying it every day of every year since then. I'd said it to myself first, when I met people on the street that I knew were thinking of Danny's disgrace, and I didn't see how I was going to get up courage to pass 'em. And I said it when I was lying on my bed at night with my heart so sore and heavy I couldn't sleep, and after a while it did begin to put courage into me, so that I could hope in earnest. And when I did *that,* little lass——"

He leaned over to smile into her eyes, now full of tears, he had so wrought upon her tender sympathies——

"When I did that, it put a rainbow around my

trouble just as that prism did around your empty holiday tree. It changed the looks of the whole world for me.

"*That's* what I brought you out here to tell you, Georgina. I want to give you the same thing that your grandfather Huntingdon gave me—that line to live by. Because troubles come to everybody. They'll come to you, too, but I want you to know this, Baby, they can't hurt you as long as you keep Hope at the prow, because Hope is a magic glass that makes rainbows of our tears. Now you won't forget that, will you? Even after Uncle Darcy is dead and gone, you'll remember that he brought you out here on your birthday to give you that good word—*'still bear up and steer right onward,'* no matter what happens. And to tell you that in all the long, hard years he's lived through, he's proved it was good."

Georgina, awed and touched of soul, could only nod her assent. But because Childhood sometimes has no answer to make to the confidences of Age is no reason that they are not taken to heart and stowed away there for the years to build upon. In the unbroken silence with which they rowed back to shore, Georgina might have claimed three score years besides her own ten, so perfect was the feeling of comradeship between them.

As they passed the pier back of the antique shop, a great gray cat rose and stretched itself, then walked ponderously down to the water's edge. It was

"Grandpa." Georgina, laughing a little shakily because of recent tears, raised her prism to put a rainbow around the cat's tail, unknowing that but for him the crystal pendant would now be hanging from an antique lamp instead of from the ribbon around her neck.

CHAPTER X

MOVING PICTURES

IT often happens that when one is all primed and cocked for trouble, that trouble flaps its wings and flies away for a time, leaving nothing to fire at. So Georgina, going home with her prism and her "line to live by," ready and eager to prove how bravely she could meet disappointments, found only pleasant surprises awaiting her.

Mrs. Triplett had made a birthday cake in her absence. It was on the supper table with ten red candles atop. And there was a note from Barby beside her plate which had come in the last mail. It had been posted at some way-station. There was a check inside for a dollar which she was to spend as she pleased. A dear little note it was, which made Georgina's throat ache even while it brought a glow to her heart. Then Belle, who had not known it was her birthday in time to make her a present, announced that she would take her to a moving picture show after supper, instead.

Georgina had frequently been taken to afternoon performances, but never at night. It was an adventure in itself just to be down in the part of town

where the shops were, when they were all lighted, and when the summer people were surging along the board-walk and out into the middle of the narrow street in such crowds that the automobiles and "accommodations" had to push their way through slowly, with a great honking of warning horns.

The Town Hall was lighted for a dance when they passed it. The windows of the little souvenir shops seemed twice as attractive as when seen by day, and early as it was in the evening, people were already lined up in the drug-store, three deep around the soda-water fountain.

Georgina, thankful that Tippy had allowed her to wear her gold locket for the occasion, walked down the aisle and took her seat near the stage, feeling as conspicuous and self-conscious as any debutante entering a box at Grand Opera.

It was a hot night, but on a line with the front seats, there was a double side door opening out onto a dock. From where Georgina sat she could look out through the door and see the lights of a hundred boats twinkling in long wavy lines across the black water, and now and then a salt breeze with the fishy tang she loved, stole across the room and touched her cheek like a cool finger.

The play was not one which Barbara would have chosen for Georgina to see, being one that was advertised as a thriller. It was full of hair-breadth escapes and tragic scenes. There was a shipwreck in

it, and passengers were brought ashore in the breeches buoy, just as she had seen sailors brought in on practice days over at the Race Point Life-saving station. And there was a still form stretched out stark and dripping under a piece of tarpaulin, and a girl with long fair hair streaming wildly over her shoulders knelt beside it wringing her hands.

Georgina stole a quick side-glance at Belle. That was the way it had been in the story of Emmett Potter's drowning, as they told it on the day of Cousin Mehitable's visit. Belle's hands were locked together in her lap, and her lips were pressed in a thin line as if she were trying to keep from saying something. Several times in the semi-darkness of the house her handkerchief went furtively to her eyes.

Georgina's heart beat faster. Somehow, with the piano pounding out that deep tum-tum, like waves booming up on the rocks, she began to feel strangely confused, as if *she* were the heroine on the films; as if *she* were kneeling there on the shore in that tragic moment of parting from her dead lover. She was sure that she knew exactly how Belle felt then, how she was feeling now.

When the lights were switched on again and they rose to go out, Georgina was so deeply under the spell of the play that it gave her a little shock of surprise when Belle began talking quite cheerfully and in her ordinary manner to her next neighbor. She even laughed in response to some joking remark

as they edged their way slowly up the aisle to the door. It seemed to Georgina that if she had lived through a scene like the one they had just witnessed, she could never smile again. On the way out she glanced up again at Belle several times, wondering.

Going home the street was even more crowded than it had been coming. They could barely push their way along, and were bumped into constantly by people dodging back to escape the jam when the crowd had to part to let a vehicle through. But after a few blocks of such jostling the going was easier. The drug-store absorbed part of the throng, and most of the procession turned up Carver Street to the Gifford House and the cottages beyond on Bradford Street.

By the time Georgina and Belle came to the last half-mile of the plank walk, scarcely a footstep sounded behind them. After passing the Green Stairs there was an unobstructed view of the harbor. A full moon was high overhead, flooding the water and beach with such a witchery of light that Georgina moved along as if she were in a dream—in a silver dream beside a silver sea.

Belle pointed to a little pavilion in sight of the breakwater. "Let's go over there and sit down a few minutes," she said. "It's a waste of good material to go indoors on a night like this."

They crossed over, sinking in the sand as they stepped from the road to the beach, till Georgina

had to take off her slippers and shake them before she could settle down comfortably on the bench in the pavilion. They sat there a while without speaking, just as they had sat before the pictures on the films, for never on any film was ever shown a scene of such entrancing loveliness as the one spread out before them. In the broad path made by the moon hung ghostly sails, rose great masts, twinkled myriads of lights. It was so still they could hear the swish of the tide creeping up below, the dip of near-by oars and the chug of a motor boat, far away down by the railroad wharf.

Then Belle began to talk. She looked straight out across the shining path of the moon and spoke as if she were by herself. She did not look at Georgina, sitting there beside her. Perhaps if she had, she would have realized that her listener was only a child and would not have said all she did. Or maybe, something within her felt the influence of the night, the magical drawing of the moon as the tide feels it, and she could not hold back the long-repressed speech that rose to her lips. Maybe it was that the play they had seen, quickened old memories into painful life again.

It was on a night just like this, she told Georgina, that Emmett first told her that he cared for her—ten years ago this summer. Ten years! The whole of Georgina's little lifetime! And now Belle was twenty-seven. Twenty-seven seemed very old to

Georgina. She stole another upward glance at her companion. Belle did not look old, sitting there in her white dress, like a white moonflower in that silver radiance, a little lock of soft blonde hair fluttering across her cheek.

In a rush of broken sentences with long pauses between which somehow told almost as much as words, Belle recalled some of the scenes of that summer, and Georgina, who up to this night had only glimpsed the dim outlines of romance, as a child of ten would glimpse them through old books, suddenly saw it face to face, and thereafter found it something to wonder about and dream sweet, vague dreams over.

Suddenly Belle stood up with a complete change of manner.

"My! it must be getting late," she said briskly. "Aunt Maria will scold if I keep you out any longer."

Going home, she was like the Belle whom Georgina had always known—so different from the one lifting the veil of memories for the little while they sat in the pavilion.

Georgina had thought that with no Barby to "button her eyes shut with a kiss" at the end of her birthday, the going-to-sleep time would be sad. But she was so busy recalling the events of the day that she never thought of the omitted ceremony. For a long time she lay awake, imagining all sorts of beautiful scenes in which she was the heroine.

First, she went back to what Uncle Darcy had

told her, and imagined herself as rescuing an only child who was drowning. The whole town stood by and cheered when she came up with it, dripping, and the mother took her in her arms and said, "*You* are our prism, Georgina Huntingdon! But for your noble act our lives would be, indeed, desolate. It is you who have filled them with rainbows."

Then she was in a ship crossing the ocean, and a poor sailor hearing her speak of Cape Cod would come and ask her to tell him of its people, and she would find he was Danny. She would be the means of restoring him to his parents.

And then, she and Richard on some of their treasure-hunting expeditions which they were still planning every time they met, would unearth a casket some dark night by the light of a fitful lantern, and inside would be a confession written by the man who had really stolen the money, saying that Dan Darcy was innocent. And Uncle Darcy and Aunt Elspeth would be so heavenly glad—— The tears came to Georgina's eyes as she pictured the scene in the little house in Fishburn Court, it came to her so vividly.

The clock downstairs struck twelve, but still she went on with the pleasing pictures moving through her mind as they had moved across the films earlier in the evening. The last one was a combination of what she had seen there and what Belle had told her.

She was sitting beside a silver sea across which

a silver moon was making a wonderful shining path of silver ripples, and somebody was telling her—what Emmett had told Belle ten years ago. And she knew past all doubting that if that shadowy somebody beside her should die, she would carry the memory of him to her grave as Belle was doing. It seemed such a sweet, sad way to live that she thought it would be more interesting to have her life like that, than to have it go along like the lives of all the married people of her acquaintance. And if *he* had a father like Emmett's father she would cling to him as Belle did, and go to see him often and take the part of a real daughter to him. But she wouldn't want him to be like Belle's "Father Potter." He was an old fisherman, too crippled to follow the sea any longer, so now he was just a mender of nets, sitting all day knotting twine with dirty tar-blackened fingers.

The next morning when she went downstairs it was Belle and not Mrs. Triplett who was stepping about the kitchen in a big gingham apron, preparing breakfast. Mrs. Triplett was still in bed. Such a thing had never happened before within Georgina's recollection.

"It's the rheumatism in her back," Belle reported. "It's so bad she can't lie still with any comfort, and she can't move without groaning. So she's sort of 'between the de'il and the deep sea.' And touchy is no name for it. She doesn't like it if you don't and

she doesn't like it if you do; but you can't wonder when the pain's so bad. It's pretty near lumbago."

Georgina, who had finished her dressing by tying the prism around her neck, was still burning with the desire which Uncle Darcy's talk had kindled within her, to be a little comfort to everybody.

"Let me take her toast and tea up to her," she begged. With that toast and tea she intended to pass along the good word Uncle Darcy had given her—"the line to live by." But Tippy was in no humor to be adjured by a chit of a child to bear up and steer right onward. Such advice would have been coldly received just then even from her minister.

"You don't know what you're talking about," she exclaimed testily. "Bear up? Of course I'll bear up. There's nothing else *to* do with rheumatism, but you needn't come around with any talk of putting rainbows around it or me either."

She gave her pillow an impatient thump with her hard knuckles.

"Deliver me from people who make it their business in life always to act cheerful no matter *what*. The Scripture itself says 'There's a time to laugh and a time to weep, a time to mourn and a time to dance.' When the weeping time comes I can't abide either people or books that go around spreading cheerful sayings on everybody like salve!"

Tippy, lying there with her hair screwed into a tight little button on the top of her head, looked

strangely unlike herself. Georgina descended to the kitchen, much offended. It hurt her feelings to have her good offices spurned in such a way. She didn't care how bad anybody's rheumatism was she muttered. "It was no excuse for saying such nasty things to people who were trying to be kind to them."

Belle suggested presently that the customary piano practice be omitted that morning for fear it might disturb Aunt Maria, so when the usual little tasks were done Georgina would have found time dragging, had it not been for the night letter which a messenger boy brought soon after breakfast. Grandfather Shirley was better than she had expected to find him, Barby wired. Particulars would follow soon in a letter. It cheered Georgina up so much that she took a pencil and tablet of paper up into the willow tree and wrote a long account to her mother of the birthday happenings. What with the red-candled cake and the picture show and the afternoon in the boat it sounded as if she had had a very happy day. But mostly she wrote about the prism, and what Uncle Darcy had told her about the magic glass of Hope. When it was done she went in to Belle.

"May I go down to the post-office to mail this and stop on my way back at the Green Stairs and see if Richard can come and play with me?" she asked.

Belle considered. "Better stay down at the Milford's to do your playing," she answered. "It might

bother Aunt Maria to have a boy romping around here."

So Georgina fared forth, after taking off her prism and hanging it in a safe place. Only Captain Kidd frisked down to meet her when she stood under the studio window and gave the alley yodel which Richard had taught her. There was no answer. She repeated it several times, and then Mr. Moreland appeared at the window, in his artist's smock with a palette on his thumb and a decidedly impatient expression on his handsome face. Richard was posing, he told her, and couldn't leave for half an hour. His tone was impatient, too, for he had just gotten a good start after many interruptions.

Undecided whether to go back home or sit down on the sand and wait, Georgina stood looking idly about her. And while she hesitated, Manuel and Joseph and Rosa came straggling along the beach in search of adventure.

It came to Georgina like an inspiration that it wasn't Barby who had forbidden her to play with them, it was Tippy. And with a vague feeling that she was justified in disobeying her because of her recent crossness, she rounded them up for a chase over the granite slabs of the breakwater. If they would be Indians, she proposed, she'd be the Deer-slayer, like the hero of the Leather-Stocking Tales, and chase 'em with a gun.

They had never heard of those tales, but they were more than willing to undertake any game which Georgina might propose. So after a little coaching in war-whoops, with a battered tin pan for a tom-tom, three impromptu Indians sped down the beach under the studio windows, pursued by a swift-footed Deer-slayer with flying curls. The end of a broken oar was her musket, which she brandished fiercely as she echoed their yells.

Mr. Moreland gave a groan of despair as he looked at his model when those war-whoops broke loose. Richard, who had succeeded after many trials in lapsing into the dreamy attitude which his father wanted, started up at the first whoop, so alert and interested that his nostrils quivered. He scented excitement of some kind and was so eager to be in the midst of it that the noise of the tom-tom made him wriggle in his chair.

He looked at his father appealingly, then made an effort to settle down into his former attitude. His body assumed the same listless pose as before, but his eyes were so eager and shining with interest that they fairly spoke each time the rattly drumming on the tin pan sounded a challenge.

"It's no use, Dicky," said his father at last. "It's all up with us for this time. You might as well go on. But I wish that little tom-boy had stayed at home."

And Richard went, with a yell and a hand-spring,

to throw in his lot with Manuel and Joseph and be chased by the doughty Deer-slayer and her hound. In the readjustment of parts Rosa was told to answer to the name of Hector. It was all one to Rosa whether she was hound or redskin, so long as she was allowed a part in the thrilling new game. Richard had the promise of being Deer-slayer next time they played it.

CHAPTER XI

THE OLD RIFLE GIVES UP ITS SECRET

OUT of that game with forbidden playmates, grew events which changed the lives of several people. It began by Richard's deciding that a real gun was necessary for his equipment if he was to play the part of Leather-Stocking properly. Also, he argued, it would be a valuable addition to their stock of fire-arms. The broken old horse-pistols were good enough to play at pirating with, but something which would really shoot was needed when they started out in earnest on a sure-enough adventure.

Georgina suggested that he go to Fishburn Court and borrow a rifle that she had seen up in Uncle Darcy's attic. She would go with him and do the asking, she added, but Belle had promised to take her with her the next time she went to see the net-mender, and the next time would be the following afternoon, if Tippy was well enough to be up and around. Georgina couldn't miss the chance to see inside the cottage that had been the home of a hero and Belle's drowned lover. She wanted to see the newspaper which Mr. Potter showed everybody who went to the house. It had an account of the wreck

and the rescue in it, with Emmett's picture on the front page, and black headlines under it that said, "Died like a hero."

Tippy was well enough to be up next day, so Richard went alone to Fishburn Court, and Georgina trudged along the sandy road with Belle to the weather-beaten cottage on the edge of the cranberry bog. Belle told her more about the old man as they walked along.

"Seems as if he just lives on that memory. He can't get out in the boats any more, being so crippled up, and he can't see to read much, so there's lots of time for him to sit and think on the past. If it wasn't for the nets he'd about lose his mind. I wouldn't say it out, and you needn't repeat it, but sometimes I think it's already touched a mite. You see the two of them lived there together so long alone, that Emmett was all in all to his father. I suppose that's why Emmett is all he can talk about now."

When they reached the cottage Mr. Potter was sitting out in front as usual, busy with his work. Georgina was glad that he did not offer to shake hands. His were so dirty and black with tar she felt she could not bear to touch them. He was a swarthy old man with skin like wrinkled leather, and a bushy, grizzled beard which grew up nearly to his eyes. Again Georgina wondered, looking at Belle in her crisp, white dress and white shoes. How could she

care for this unkempt old creature enough to call him Father?

As she followed Belle around inside the dreary three-room cottage she wanted to ask if this would have been her home if Emmett had not been drowned, but she felt a delicacy about asking such a question. She couldn't imagine Belle in such a setting, but after she had followed her around a while longer she realized that the house wouldn't stay dreary with such a mistress. In almost no time the place was put to rights, and there was a pan of cookies ready to slip into the oven.

When the smell of their browning stole out to the front door the old man left his bench and came in to get a handful of the hot cakes. Then, just as Belle said he would, he told Georgina all that had happened the night of the wreck.

"That's the very chair he was sittin' in, when Luke Jones come in with the word that men were needed. He started right off with Luke soon as he could get into his oil-skins, for 'twas stormin' to beat the band. But he didn't go fur. Almost no time it seemed like, he was comin' into the house agin, and he went into that bedroom there, and shet the door behind him. That of itself ought to 'uv made me know something out of the usual was beginnin' to happen, for he never done such a thing before. A few minutes later he came out with an old rifle that him and Dan Darcy

used to carry around in the dunes for target shootin' and he set it right down in that corner by the chimney jamb.

" 'First time anybody passes this way goin' down to Fishburn Court,' he says, 'I wish you'd send this along to Uncle Dan'l. It's his by rights, and he'd ought a had it long ago.'

"An' them was his last words to me, except as he pulled the door to after him he called 'Good-bye Pop, if I don't see you agin.'

"I don't know when he'd done such a thing before as to say good-bye when he went out, and I've often wondered over it sence, could he 'a had any warnin' that something was goin' to happen to him?"

Georgina gazed at the picture in the newspaper long and curiously. It had been copied from a faded tin-type, but even making allowances for that Emmett didn't look as she imagined a hero should, nor did it seem possible it could be the man Belle had talked about. She wished she hadn't seen it. It dimmed the glamor of romance which seemed to surround him like a halo. Hearing about him in the magical moonlight she had pictured him as looking as Sir Galahad. But if *this* was what he really looked like—— Again she glanced wonderingly at Belle. How could she care so hard for ten long years for just an ordinary man like that?

When it was time to go home Belle suggested that

they walk around by Fishburn Court. It would be out of their way, but she had heard that Aunt Elspeth wasn't as well as usual.

"Emmett always called her Aunt," she explained to Georgina as they walked along, "so I got into the way of doing it, too. He was so fond of Dan's mother. She was so good to him after his own went that I feel I want to be nice to her whenever I can, for his sake."

"You know," she continued, "Aunt Elspeth never would give up but that Dan was innocent, and since her memory's been failing her this last year, she talks all the time about his coming home; just lies there in bed half her time and babbles about him. It almost kills Uncle Dan'l to hear her, because, of course, he knows the truth of the matter, that Dan *was* guilty. He as good as confessed it before he ran away, and the running away itself told the story."

When they reached Fishburn Court they could see two people sitting in front of the cottage. Uncle Darcy was in an armchair on the grass with one of the cats in his lap, and Richard sat on one seat of the red, wooden swing with Captain Kidd on the opposite one. Richard had a rifle across his knees, the one Georgina had suggested borrowing. He passed his hand caressingly along its stock now and then, and at intervals raised it to sight along the barrel. It was so heavy he could not keep it from wobbling when he raised it to take aim in various directions.

At the click of the gate-latch the old man tumbled Yellownose out of his lap and rose stiffly to welcome his guests.

"Come right in," he said cordially. "Mother'll be glad to see you, Belle. She's been sort of low in her mind lately, and needs cheering up."

He led the way into a low-ceilinged, inner bedroom with the shades all pulled down. It was so dark, compared to the glaring road they had been following, that Georgina blinked at the dim interior. She could scarcely make out the figure on the high-posted bed, and drew back, whispering to Belle that she'd stay outside until they were ready to go home. Leaving them on the threshold, she went back to the shady door-yard to a seat in the swing beside Captain Kidd.

"It's Uncle Darcy's son's rifle," explained Richard. "He's been telling me about him. Feel how smooth the stock is."

Georgina reached over and passed her hand lightly along the polished wood.

"He and a friend of his called Emmett Potter used to carry it on the dunes sometimes to shoot at a mark with. It wasn't good for much else, it's so old. Dan got it in a trade once; traded a whole litter of collie pups for it. Uncle Darcy says he'd forgotten there was such a gun till somebody brought it to him after Emmett was drowned."

"Oh," interrupted Georgina, her eyes wide with

interest. "Emmett's father has just been telling me about this very rifle. But I didn't dream it was the one I'd seen up in the attic here. He showed me the corner where Emmett stood it when he left for the wreck, and told what was to be done with it. 'Them were his last words,' " she added, quoting Mr. Potter.

She reached out her hand for the clumsy old firearm and almost dropped it, finding it so much heavier than she expected. She wanted to touch with her own fingers the weapon that had such an interesting history, and about which a hero had spoken his last words.

"The hammer's broken," continued Richard. "Whoever brought it home let it fall. It's all rusty, too, because it was up in the attic so many years and the roof leaked on it. But Uncle Darcy said lots of museums would be glad to have it because there aren't many of these old flint-locks left now. He's going to leave it to the Pilgrim museum up by the monument when he's dead and gone, but he wants to keep it as long as he lives because Danny set such store by it."

"There's some numbers or letters or something on it," announced Georgina, peering at a small brass plate on the stock. "I can't make them out. I tell you what let's do," she exclaimed in a burst of enthusiasm. "Let's polish it up so's we can read them.

Tippy uses vinegar and wood ashes for brass. I'll run get some."

Georgina was enough at home here to find what she wanted without asking, and as full of resources as Robinson Crusoe. She was back in a very few minutes with a shovel full of ashes from the kitchen stove, and an old can lid full of vinegar, drawn from a jug in the corner cupboard. With a scrap of a rag dipped first in vinegar, then in ashes, she began scrubbing the brass plate diligently. It had corroded until there was an edge of green entirely around it.

"I love to take an old thing like this and scrub it till it shines like gold," she said, scouring away with such evident enjoyment of the job that Richard insisted on having a turn. She surrendered the rag grudgingly, but continued to direct operations.

"Now dip it in the ashes again. No, not that way, double the rag up and use more vinegar. Rub around that other corner a while. Here, let me show you."

She took the rifle away from him again and proceeded to illustrate her advice. Suddenly she looked up, startled.

"I believe we've rubbed it loose. It moved a little to one side. See?"

He grabbed it back and examined it closely. "I bet it's meant to move," he said finally. "It looks like a lid, see! It slides sideways."

"Oh, I remember now," she cried, much excited.

"That's the way Leather-Stocking's rifle was made. There was a hole in the stock with a brass plate over it, and he kept little pieces of oiled deer-skin inside of it to wrap bullets in before he loaded 'em in. I remember just as plain, the place in the story where he stopped to open it and take out a piece of oiled deer-skin when he started to load."

As she explained she snatched the rifle back into her own hands once more, and pried at the brass plate until she broke the edge of her thumb nail. Then Richard took it, and with the aid of a rusty button-hook which he happened to have in his pocket, having found it on the street that morning, he pushed the plate entirely back.

"There's something white inside!" he exclaimed.

Instantly two heads bent over with his in an attempt to see, for Captain Kidd's shaggy hair was side by side with Georgina's curls, his curiosity as great as hers.

"Whatever's in there has been there an awful long time," said Richard as he poked at the contents with his button-hook, "for Uncle Darcy said the rifle's never been used since it was brought back to him."

"And it's ten years come Michaelmas since Emmett was drowned," said Georgina, again quoting the old net-mender.

The piece of paper which they finally succeeded in drawing out had been folded many times and

crumpled into a flat wad. Evidently the message on it had been scrawled hastily in pencil by someone little used to letter writing. It was written in an odd hand, and the united efforts of the two little readers could decipher only parts of it.

"I can read any kind of plain writing like they do in school," said Richard, "but not this sharp-cornered kind where the m's and u's are alike, and all the tails are pointed."

Slowly they puzzled out parts of it, halting long over some of the undecipherable words, but a few words here and there were all they could recognize. There were long stretches that had no meaning whatever for them. This much, however, they managed to spell out:

"Dan never took the money. . . . I did it. . . . He went away because he knew I did it and wouldn't tell.... Sorry.... Can't stand it any longer.... Put an end to it all. . . ."

It was signed "Emmett Potter."

The two children looked at each other with puzzled eyes until into Georgina's came a sudden and startled understanding. Snatching up the paper she almost fell out of the swing and ran towards the house screaming:

"Uncle Darcy! Uncle Darcy! Look what we've found."

She tripped over a piece of loose carpet spread

just inside the front door as a rug and fell full length, but too excited to know that she had skinned her elbow she scrambled up, still calling:

"Uncle Darcy, *Dan never took the money. It was Emmett Potter. He said so himself!*"

CHAPTER XII

A HARD PROMISE

A DOZEN times in Georgina's day-dreaming she had imagined this scene. She had run to Uncle Darcy with the proof of Dan's innocence, heard his glad cry, seen his face fairly transfigured as he read the confession aloud. Now it was actually happening before her very eyes, but where was the scene of heavenly gladness that should have followed?

Belle, startled even more than he by Georgina's outcry, and quicker to act, read the message over his shoulder, recognized the handwriting and grasped the full significance of the situation before he reached the name at the end. For ten years three little notes in that same peculiar hand had lain in her box of keepsakes. There was no mistaking that signature. She had read it and cried over it so many times that now as it suddenly confronted her with its familiar twists and angles it was as startling as if Emmett's voice had called to her.

As Uncle Darcy looked up from the second reading, with a faltering exclamation of thanksgiving, she snatched the paper from his shaking hands and tore it in two. Then crumpling the pieces and flinging them from her, she seized him by the wrists.

"No, you're *not* going to tell the whole world," she cried wildly, answering the announcement he

made with the tears raining down his cheeks. "You're not going to tell anybody! Think of me! Think of Father Potter!"

She almost screamed her demand. He could hardly believe it was Belle, this frenzied girl, who, heretofore, had seemed the gentlest of souls. He looked at her in a dazed way, so overwhelmed by the discovery that had just been made, that he failed to comprehend the reason for her white face and agonized eyes, till she threw up her arms crying:

"*Emmett* a thief! God in heaven! It'll kill me!"

It was the sight of Georgina's shocked face with Richard's at the door, that made things clear to the old man. He waved them away, with hands which shook as if he had the palsy.

"Go on out, children, for a little while," he said gently, and closed the door in their faces.

Slowly they retreated to the swing, Georgina clasping the skinned elbow which had begun to smart. She climbed into one seat of the swing and Richard and Captain Kidd took the other. As they swung back and forth she demanded in a whisper:

"Why is it that grown people always shut children out of their secrets? Seems as if we have a right to know what's the matter when *we* found the paper."

Richard made no answer, for just then the sound of Belle's crying came out to them. The windows of the cottage were all open and the grass plot between

the windows and the swing being a narrow one the closed door was of little avail. It was very still there in the shady dooryard, so still that they could hear old Yellownose purr, asleep on the cushion in the wooden arm-chair beside the swing. The broken sentences between the sobs were plainly audible. It seemed so terrible to hear a grown person cry, that Georgina felt as she did that morning long ago, when old Jeremy's teeth flew into the fire. Her confidence was shaken in the world. She felt there could be no abiding happiness in anything.

"She's begging him not to tell," whispered Richard.

"But I owe it to Danny," they heard Uncle Darcy say. And then, "Why should I spare Emmett's father? Emmett never spared me, he never spared Danny."

An indistinct murmur as if Belle's answer was muffled in her handkerchief, then Uncle Darcy's voice again:

"It isn't fair that the town should go on counting him a hero and brand my boy as a coward, when it's Emmett who was the coward as well as the thief."

Again Belle's voice in a quick cry of pain, as sharp as if she had been struck. Then the sound of another door shutting, and when the voices began again it was evident they had withdrawn into the kitchen.

"They don't want Aunt Elspeth to hear," said Georgina.

"What's it all about?" asked Richard, much mystified.

Georgina told him all that she knew herself, gathered from the scraps she had heard the day of Cousin Mehitable's visit, and from various sources since; told him in a half whisper stopping now and then when some fragment of a sentence floated out to them from the kitchen; for occasional words still continued to reach them through the windows in the rear, when the voices rose at intervals to a higher pitch.

What passed behind those closed doors the children never knew. They felt rather than understood what was happening. Belle's pleading was beginning to be effectual, and the old man was rising to the same heights of self-sacrifice which Dan had reached, when he slipped away from home with the taint of his friend's disgrace upon him in order to save that friend.

That some soul tragedy had been enacted in that little room the children felt vaguely when Belle came out after a while. Her eyes were red and swollen and her face drawn and pinched looking. She did not glance in their direction, but stood with her face averted and hand on the gate-latch while Uncle Darcy stopped beside the swing.

"Children," he said solemnly, "I want you to promise me never to speak to anyone about finding that note in the old rifle till I give you permission.

Will you do this for me, just because I ask it, even if I can't tell you why?"

"Mustn't I even tell Barby?" asked Georgina, anxiously.

He hesitated, glancing uncertainly at Belle, then answered:

"No, not even your mother, till I tell you that you can. Now you see what a very important secret it is. Can *you* keep it, son? Will you promise me too?"

He turned to Richard with the question. With a finger under the boy's chin he tipped up his face and looked into it searchingly. The serious, brown eyes looked back into his, honest and unflinching.

"Yes, I promise," he answered. "Honor bright I'll not tell."

The old man turned to the waiting figure at the gate.

"It's all right, Belle. You needn't worry about it any more. You can trust us."

She made no answer, but looking as if she had aged years in the last half hour, she passed through the gate and into the sandy court, moving slowly across it towards the street beyond.

With a long-drawn sigh the old man sank down on the door-step and buried his face in his hands. They were still shaking as if he had the palsy. For some time the children sat in embarrassed silence, thinking every moment that he would look up and say something. They wanted to go, but waited for him

to make some movement. He seemed to have forgotten they were there. Finally a clock inside the cottage began striking five. It broke the spell which bound them.

"Let's go," whispered Richard.

"All right," was the answer, also whispered. "Wait till I take the shovel and can lid back to the kitchen."

"I'll take 'em," he offered. "I want to get a drink, anyhow."

Stealthily, as if playing Indian, they stepped out of the swing and tiptoed through the grass around the corner of the house. Even the dog went noiselessly, instead of frisking and barking as he usually did when starting anywhere. Their return was equally stealthy. As they slipped through the gate Georgina looked back at the old man. He was still sitting on the step, his face in his hands, as if he were bowed down by some weight too heavy for his shoulders to bear.

The weary hopelessness of his attitude made her want to run back and throw her arms around his neck, but she did not dare. Trouble as great as that seemed to raise a wall around itself. It could not be comforted by a caress. The only thing to do was to slip past and not look.

Richard shared the same awe, for he went away leaving the rifle lying in the grass. Instinctively he felt that it ought not to be played with now. It was the rifle which had changed everything.

CHAPTER XIII

LOST AND FOUND AT THE LINIMENT WAGON

WITH Mrs. Triplett back in bed again on account of the rheumatism which crippled her, and Belle going about white of face and sick of soul, home held little cheer for Georgina. But with Mrs. Triplett averse to company of any kind, and Belle anxious to be alone with her misery, there was nothing to hinder Georgina from seeking cheer elsewhere and she sought it early and late.

She had spent her birthday dollar in imagination many times before she took her check to the bank to have it cashed. With Richard to lend her courage, and Manuel, Joseph and Rosa trailing after by special invitation, she walked in and asked for Mr. Gates. That is the way Barby always did, and as far as Georgina knew he was the only one to apply to for money.

The paying teller hesitated a moment about summoning the president of the bank from his private office at the behest of so small a child, so small that even on tiptoe her eyes could barely peer into the window of his cage. But they were entreating eyes, so big and brown and sure of their appeal that he decided to do their bidding.

Just as he turned to knock at the door behind him it opened, and Mr. Gates came out with the man with whom he had been closeted in private conference. It was Richard's Cousin James. The children did not see him, however, for he stopped at one of the high desks inside to look at some papers which one of the clerks spread out before him.

"Oh, it's my little friend, Georgina," said Mr. Gates, smiling in response to the beaming smile she gave him. "Well, what can I do for you, my dear?"

"Cash my check, please," she said, pushing the slip of paper towards him with as grand an air as if it had been for a million dollars instead of one, "and all in nickels, please."

He glanced at the name she had written painstakingly across the back.

"Well, Miss Huntingdon," he exclaimed gravely, although there was a twinkle in his eyes, "if all lady customers were as businesslike in endorsing their checks and in knowing what they want, we bankers would be spared a lot of trouble."

It was the first time that Georgina had ever been called Miss Huntingdon, and knowing he said it to tease her, it embarrassed her to the point of making her stammer, when he asked her most unexpectedly while picking out twenty shining new nickels to stuff into the little red purse:

"All of these going to buy tracts for the missionaries to take to the little heathen?"

"No, they're all going to—to——"

She didn't like to say for soda water and chewing gum and the movies, and hesitated till a substitute word occurred to her.

"They're all going to go for buying good times. It's for a sort of a club we made up this morning, Richard and me."

"May I ask the name of the club?"

Georgina glanced around. No other customer happened to be in the bank at the moment and Richard had wandered out to the street to wait for her. So tiptoeing a little higher she said in a low tone as if imparting a secret:

"It's the *Rainbow* Club. We pretend that everytime we make anybody happy we've made a little rainbow in the world."

"Well, bless your heart," was the appreciative answer. "You've already made one in here. You do that every time you come around."

Then he looked thoughtfully at her over his spectacles.

"Would you take an old fellow like me into your club?"

Georgina considered a moment, first stealing a glance at him to see if he were in earnest or still trying to tease. He seemed quite serious so she answered:

"If you really *want* to belong. Anybody with a bank full of money ought to be able to make happy times for the whole town."

"Any dues to pay? What are the rules and what are the duties of a member?"

Again Georgina was embarrassed. He seemed to expect so much more than she had to offer. She swung the red purse around nervously as she answered:

"I guess you won't think it's much of a club. There's nothing to it but just its name, and all we do is just to go around making what it says."

"Count me as Member number Three," said Mr. Gates gravely. "I'm proud to join you. Shake hands on it. I'll try to be a credit to the organization, and I hope you'll drop around once in a while and let me know how it's getting along."

The beaming smile with which Georgina shook hands came back to him all morning at intervals.

Cousin James Milford, who had been an interested listener, followed her out of the bank presently and as he drove his machine slowly past the drug-store he saw the five children draining their glasses at the soda-water fountain. He stopped, thinking to invite Richard and Georgina to go to Truro with him. It never would have occurred to him to give the three little Portuguese children a ride also had he not overheard that conversation in the bank.

"Well, why not?" he asked himself, smiling inwardly. "It might as well be rainbows for the crowd while I'm about it."

So for the first time in their lives Manuel and

Joseph and Rosa rode in one of the "honk wagons" which heretofore they had known only as something to be dodged when one walked abroad. Judging by the blissful grins which took permanent lodging on their dirty faces, Cousin James was eligible to the highest position the new club could bestow, if ever he should apply for membership.

If Mrs. Triplett had been downstairs that evening, none of the birthday nickels would have found their way through the ticket window of the moving picture show. She supposed that Georgina was reading as usual beside the evening lamp, or was out on the front porch talking to Belle. But Belle, not caring to talk to anyone, had given instant consent when Georgina, who wanted to go to the show, having seen wonderful posters advertising it, suggested that Mrs. Fayal would take her in charge. She did not add that she had already seen Mrs. Fayal and promised to provide tickets for her and the children in case she could get permission from home. Belle did not seem interested in hearing such things, so Georgina hurried off lest something might happen to interfere before she was beyond the reach of summoning voices.

On the return from Truro she had asked to be put out at the Fayal cottage, having it in mind to make some such arrangement. Manuel had seen one show, but Joseph and Rosa had never so much as had their heads inside of one. She found Mrs.

Fayal glooming over a wash-tub, not because she objected to washing for the summer people. She was used to that, having done it six days out of seven every summer since she had married Joe Fayal. What she was glooming over was that Joe was home from a week's fishing trip with his share of the money for the biggest catch of the season, and not a dime of it had she seen. It had all gone into the pocket of an itinerant vendor, and Joe was lying in a sodden stupor out under the grape arbor at the side of the cottage.

Georgina started to back away when she found the state of affairs. She did not suppose Mrs. Fayal would have a mind for merry-making under the circumstances. But, indeed, Mrs. Fayal did.

"All the more reason that I should go off and forget my troubles and have a good time for a while," she said decidedly. Georgina recognized the spirit if not the words of her own "line to live by." Mrs. Fayal could bear up and steer onward with a joyful heart any time she had the price of admission to a movie in her pocket. So feeling that as a member of the new club she could not have a better opportunity to make good its name, Georgina promised the tickets for the family even if she could not go herself. She would send them by Richard if not allowed to take them in person.

It was still light when Georgina fared forth at the end of the long summer day. Richard joined her

at the foot of the Green Stairs with the price of his own ticket in his pocket, and Captain Kidd tagging at his heels.

"They won't let the dog into the show," Georgina reminded him.

"That's so, and he might get into a fight or run over if I left him outside," Richard answered. "B'leeve I'll shut him up in the garage."

This he did, fastening the door securely, and returning in time to see the rest of the party turning the corner, and coming towards the Green Stairs.

Mrs. Fayal, after her long day over the wash-tub, was resplendent in lavender shirt-waist, blue serge skirt and white tennis shoes, with long gold ear-rings dangling half-way to her shoulders. Manuel and Joseph were barefooted as usual, and in overalls as usual, but their lack of gala attire was made up for by Rosa's. No wax doll was ever more daintily and lacily dressed. Georgina looked at her in surprise, wishing Tippy could see her now. Rosa in her white dress and slippers and with her face clean, was a little beauty.

Mrs. Fayal made a delightful chaperon. She was just as ready as anyone in her train to stop in front of shop windows, to straggle slowly down the middle of the street, or to thrust her hand into Richard's bag of peanuts whenever he passed it around. Cracking shells and munching the nuts, they strolled along with a sense of freedom which thrilled Geor-

gina to the core. She had never felt it before. She had just bought five tickets and Richard his one, and they were about to pass in although Mrs. Fayal said it was early yet, when a deep voice roaring through the crowd attracted their attention. It was as sonorous as a megaphone.

"Walk up, ladies and gentlemen. See the wild-cat, *Texas Tim,* brought from the banks of the Brazos."

"Let's go," said Richard and Georgina in the same breath. Mrs. Fayal, out for a good time and to see all that was to be seen, bobbed her long earrings in gracious assent, and headed the procession, in order that her ample form might make an entering wedge for the others, as she elbowed her way through the crowd gathered at the street end of Railroad wharf.

It clustered thickest around a wagon in which stood a broad-shouldered man, mounted on a chair. He wore a cow-boy hat. A flaming torch set up beside the wagon lighted a cage in one end of it, in which crouched a wild-cat bewildered by the light and the bedlam of noisy, pushing human beings. The children could not see the animal at first, but pushed nearer the wagon to hear what the man was saying. He held up a bottle and shook it over the heads of the people.

"Here's your marvelous rheumatism remedy," he cried, "made from the fat of wild-cats. Warranted

to cure every kind of ache, sprain and misery known to man. Only fifty cents, ladies and gentlemen, sure cure or your money back. Anybody here with an ache or a pain?"

The children pushed closer. Richard, feeling the effect of the gun-powder he had eaten, turned to Georgina.

"I dare you to climb up and touch the end of the wild-cat's tail."

Georgina stood on tiptoe, then dodged under someone's elbow for a nearer view. The end of the tail protruded from between the bars of the cage, in easy reach if one were on the wagon, but those furtive eyes keeping watch above it were savage in their gleaming. Then she, too, remembered the gun-powder.

"I'll do it if you will."

Before Richard could put the gun-powder to the test the man reached down for a guitar leaning against his chair, and with a twanging of chords which made the shifting people on the outskirts stand still to see what would happen next, he began to sing a song that had been popular in his youth. Or, rather, it was a parody of the song. Georgina recognized it as one that she had heard Uncle Darcy sing, and even Tippy hummed it sometimes when she was sewing. It was, "When you and I were young, Maggie."

"They say we are aged and gray, Maggie,
As spray by the white breakers flung,
But the liniment keeps us as spry, Maggie,
As when you and I were young."

Several people laughed and passed on when the song was done, but the greater part of the crowd stayed, hoping to hear another, for the voice was a powerful one and fairly sweet.

"Anybody here with any aches or pains?" he called again. "If so, step this way, please, and let me make a simple demonstration of how quickly this magic oil will cure you."

There was a commotion near the wagon, and a man pushed his way through and climbed up on the wheel. He offered a stiff wrist for treatment. The vendor tipped up the bottle and poured out some pungent volatile oil from the bottle, the odor of which was far-reaching. He rubbed the wrist briskly for a moment, then gave it a slap saying, "Now see what you can do with it, my friend."

The patient scowled at it, twisting his arm in every possible direction as if skeptical of any help from such a source, but gradually letting a look of pleased surprise spread across his face. The crowd watched in amusement, and nearly everybody laughed when the patient finally announced in a loud voice that he was cured, that it was nothing short of a miracle

and that he'd buy half a dozen bottles of that witch stuff to take home to his friends.

The vendor began his speech-making again, calling attention to the cure they had just witnessed, and urging others to follow. As the subject of the cure stepped down from the wheel Richard sprang up in his place. Georgina, pressing closer, saw him lean over the side of the wagon and boldly take hold of the end of the beast's tail.

"There. I did it," he announced. "Now it's your turn."

Georgina gave one glance at the wild-cat's eyes and drew back. They seemed to glare directly at her. She wondered how strong the bars were, and if they would hold the beast in case it rose up in a rage and sprang at her. But Richard was waiting, and she clambered up on the hub of the wheel. Luckily its owner was turned towards the other side at that moment or she might have been ordered down.

"There! I did it, too," she announced an instant later. "Now you can't crow over me."

She was about to step down when she saw in the other end of the wagon, something she had not been able to see from her place on the ground under the elbows of the crowd. In a low rocking chair sat an elderly woman, oddly out of place in this traveling medicine show as far as appearance was concerned. She had a calm, motherly face, gray hair combed smoothly down over her ears, a plain old-

fashioned gray dress and an air of being perfectly at home. It was the serene, unconscious manner one would have in sitting on the door-step at home. She did not seem to belong in the midst of this seething curious mass, or to realize that she was a part of the show. She smiled now at Georgina in such a friendly way that Georgina smiled back and continued to stand on the wheel. She hoped that this nice old lady would say something about the virtues of the medicine, for it cured two more people, even while she looked, and if she could be sure it did all that was claimed for it she would spend all the rest of her birthday money in buying a bottle for Tippy.

The placid old lady said nothing, but her reassuring presence finally made Georgina decide to buy the bottle, and she emptied the red purse of everything except the tickets. Then the man embarrassed her until her cheeks flamed.

"That's right, little girl. Carry it to the dear sufferer at home who will bless you for your kindness. Anybody else here who will imitate this child's generous act? If you haven't any pain yourself, show your gratitude by thinking of someone less fortunate than you."

Georgina felt that her blushes were burning her up at thus being made the centre of public notice. She almost fell off the wheel in her haste to get down, and in doing so stumbled over a dog which suddenly emerged from under the wagon at that instant.

"Why, it's Captain Kidd!" she exclaimed in astonishment. "How ever did he get here?"

"Must have scratched under the door and trailed us," answered Richard. "Go on home, sir!" he commanded, sternly, stamping his foot. "You know they won't let you into the show with us, and you'll get into trouble if you stay downtown alone. Go on home I say."

With drooping tail and a look so reproachful that it was fairly human, Captain Kidd slunk away, starting mournfully homeward. He sneaked back in a few minutes, however, and trailed his party as far as the door of the theatre. Somebody kicked at him and he fled down the street again, retracing the trail that had led him to the wagon.

A long time after when the performance was nearly over he went swinging up the beach with something in his mouth which he had picked up from near the end of the wagon. It was a tobacco pouch of soft gray leather that had never been used for tobacco. There was something hard and round inside which felt like a bone. At the top of the Green Stairs he lay down and mouthed it a while, tugging at it with his sharp teeth; but after he had mumbled and gnawed it for some time without bringing the bone any nearer the surface, he grew tired of his newfound plaything. Dropping it in the grass, he betook himself to the door-mat on the front porch, to await his master's return.

CHAPTER XIV

BURIED TREASURE

WHEN Georgina tiptoed up the walk to the front porch where Belle sat waiting for her in the moonlight, Tippy called down that she wasn't asleep, and they needn't stay out there on her account, whispering. It did not seem an auspicious time to present the bottle of liniment, but to Georgina's surprise Tippy seemed glad to try the new remedy. The long-continued pain which refused to yield to treatment made her willing to try anything which promised relief.

It was vile-smelling stuff, so pungent that whenever the cork was taken out of the bottle the whole house knew it, but it burned with soothing fire and Tippy rose up and called it blessed before the next day was over. Before that happened, however, Georgina took advantage of Belle's easy rule to leave home as soon as her little morning tasks were done. Strolling down the board-walk with many stops she came at last to the foot of the Green Stairs. Richard sat on the top step, tugging at a knotted string.

"Come on up," he called. "See what I've taken away from Captain Kidd. He was just starting to bury it. Looks like a tobacco pouch, but I haven't got it untied yet. He made the string all wet, gnawing on it."

Georgina climbed to the top of the steps and sat down beside him, watching in deep and silent interest. When the string finally gave way she offered her lap to receive the contents of the pouch. Two five-dollar gold pieces rolled out first, then a handful of small change, a black ring evidently whittled out of a rubber button and lastly a watch-fob ornament. It was a little compass, set in something which looked like a nut.

"I believe that's a buckeye," said Richard. He examined it carefully on all sides, then called excitedly:

"Aw, look here! See those letters scratched on the side—'D. D.'? That stands for *my* name, Daredevil Dick. I'm going to keep it."

"That's the cunningest thing I ever saw," declared Georgina in a tone both admiring and envious, which plainly showed that she wished the initials were such as could be claimed by a Gory George. Then she picked up the pouch and thrust in her hand. Something rustled. It was a letter. Evidently it had been forwarded many times, for the envelope was entirely criss-crossed with names that had been written and blotted out that new ones might be added.

All they could make out was "Mrs. Henry"—"Texas" and "Mass."

"I'd like to have that stamp for my album," said Richard. "It's foreign. Seems to me I've got one that looks something like it, but I'm not sure. Maybe the letter will tell who the pouch belongs to."

"But we can't read other people's letters," objected Georgina.

"Well, who wants to? It won't be reading it just to look at the head and tail, will it?"

"No," admitted Georgina, hesitatingly. "Though it does seem like peeking."

"Well, if you lost something wouldn't you rather whoever found it should peek and find out it was yours, than to have it stay lost forever?"

"Yes, I s'pose so."

"Let's look, then."

Two heads bent over the sheet spread out on Richard's knee. They read slowly in unison, "Dear friend," then turned over the paper and sought the last line. "Your grateful friend Dave."

"We don't know any more now than we did before," said Georgina, virtuously folding up the letter and slipping it back into the envelope.

"Let's take it to Uncle Darcy. Then he'll let us go along and ring the bell when he calls, 'Found.' "

Richard had two objections to this. "Who'd pay him for doing it? Besides, it's gold money, and anybody who loses that much would advertise for it in

the papers. Let's keep it till this week's papers come out, and then we'll have the fun of taking it to the person who lost it."

"It wouldn't be safe for us to keep it," was Georgina's next objection. "It's gold money and burglars might find out we had it."

"Then I'll tell you"—— Richard's face shone as he made the suggestion—"Let's *bury* it. That will keep it safe till we can find the owner, and when we dig it up we can play it's pirate gold and it'll be like finding real treasure."

"Lets!" agreed Georgina. "We can keep out something, a nickel or a dime, and when we go to dig up the pouch we can throw it over toward the place where we buried the bag and say, 'Brother, go find your brother,' the way Tom Sawyer did. Then we'll be certain to hit the spot."

Richard picked up the compass, and rubbed the polished sides of the nut in which it was set.

"I'll keep this out instead of a nickel. I wonder what the fellow's name was that this D. D. stands for?"

Half an hour later two bloody-minded sea-robbers slipped through the back gate of the Milford place and took their stealthy way out into the dunes. No fierce mustachios or hoop ear-rings marked them on this occasion as the Dread Destroyer or the Menace of the Main. The time did not seem favorable for donning their real costumes. So one went disguised

as a dainty maiden in a short pink frock and long brown curls, and the other as a sturdy boy in a grass-stained linen suit with a hole in the knee of his stocking. But their speech would have betrayed their evil business had anyone been in earshot of it. One would have thought it was

"Wild Roger come again.
He spoke of forays and of frays upon the Spanish Main."

Having real gold to bury made the whole affair seem a real adventure. They were recounting to each other as they dug, the bloody fight it had taken to secure this lot of treasure.

Down in a hollow where the surrounding sand-ridges sheltered them from view, they crouched over a small basket they had brought with them and performed certain ceremonies. First the pouch was wrapped in many sheets of tin foil, which Richard had been long in collecting from various tobacco-loving friends. When that was done it flashed in the sun like a nugget of wrinkled silver. This was stuffed into a baking-powder can from which the label had been carefully scraped, and on whose lid had been scratched with a nail, the names Georgina Huntingdon and Richard Moreland, with the date.

"We'd better put our everyday names on it instead of our pirate names," Gory George suggested.

"For if anything should happen that some other pirate dug it up first they wouldn't know who the Dread Destroyer and the Menace of the Main were."

Lastly, from the basket was taken the end of a wax candle, several matches and a stick of red sealing-wax, borrowed from Cousin James' desk. Holding the end of the sealing-wax over the lighted candle until it was soft and dripping, Richard daubed it around the edge of the can lid, as he had seen the man in the express office seal packages. He had always longed to try it himself. There was something peculiarly pleasing in the smell of melted sealing-wax. Georgina found it equally alluring. She took the stick away from him when it was about half used, and finished it.

"There won't be any to put back in Cousin James' desk if you keep on using it," he warned her.

"I'm not using any more than you did," she answered, and calmly proceeded to smear on the remainder. "If you had let me seal with the first end of the stick, you'd have had all the last end to save."

All this time Captain Kidd sat close beside them, an interested spectator, but as they began digging the hole he rushed towards it and pawed violently at each shovelful of sand thrown out.

"Aw, let him help!" Richard exclaimed when Georgina ordered him to stop. "He ought to have a part in it because he found the pouch and was start-

ing to bury it his own self when I took it away from him and spoiled his fun."

Georgina saw the justice of the claim and allowed Captain Kidd to join in as he pleased, but no sooner did they stop digging to give him a chance than he stopped also.

"Rats!" called Richard in a shrill whisper.

At that familiar word the dog began digging so frantically that the sand flew in every direction. Each time he paused for breath Richard called "Rats" again. It doubled the interest for both children to have the dog take such frantic and earnest part in their game.

When the hole was pronounced deep enough the can was dropped in, the sand shoveled over it and tramped down, and a marker made. A long, forked stick, broken from a bayberry bush, was run into the ground so that only the fork of it was visible. Then at twenty paces from the stick, Richard stepping them off in four directions, consulting the little compass in so doing, Georgina placed the markers, four sections of a broken crock rescued from the ash-barrel and brought down in the basket for that especial purpose.

"We'll let it stay buried for a week," said Richard when all was done. "Unless somebody claims it sooner. If they don't come in a week, then we'll know they're never coming, and the gold will be ours."

CHAPTER XV

A NARROW ESCAPE

MR. MILFORD was stretched out in a hammock on the front porch of the bungalow when the children came back from the dunes with their empty basket. They could not see him as they climbed up the terrace, the porch being high above them and draped with vines; and he deep in a new book was only vaguely conscious of approaching voices.

They were discussing the "Rescues of Rosalind," the play they had seen the night before on the films. Their shrill, eager tones would have attracted the attention of anyone less absorbed than Mr. Milford.

"I'll bet you couldn't," Georgina was saying. "If you were gagged and bound the way Rosalind was, you *couldn't* get loose, no matter how you squirmed and twisted."

"Come back in the garage and try me," Richard retorted. "I'll prove it to you that I can."

"*Always* an automobile dashes up and there's a chase. It's been that way in every movie I ever saw," announced Georgina with the air of one who has attended nightly through many seasons.

"I can do that part all right," declared Richard. "I can run an automobile."

There was no disputing that fact, no matter how contradictory Georgina's frame of mind. Only the day before she had seen him take the wheel and run the car for three miles under the direction of Cousin James, when they came to a level stretch of road.

"Yes, but you know your Cousin James said you were never to do it unless he was along himself. You wasn't to dare to touch it when you were out with only the chauffeur."

"He wouldn't care if we got in and didn't start anything but the engine," said Richard. "Climb in and play that I'm running away with you. With the motor chugging away and shaking the machine it'll seem as if we're really going."

By this time they were inside the garage, with the doors closed behind them.

"Now you get in and keep looking back the way Rosalind did to see how near they are to catching us."

Instantly Georgina threw herself into the spirit of the game. Climbing into the back seat she assumed the pose of the kidnapped bride whose adventures had thrilled them the night before.

"Play my white veil is floating out in the wind," she commanded, "and I'm looking back and waving to my husband to come faster and take me away from the dreadful villain who is going to kill me for my jewels. I wish this car was out of doors instead of

in this dark garage. When I look back I look bang against the closed door every time, and I can't make it seem as if I was seeing far down the road."

"Play it's night," suggested Richard. He had put on a pair of goggles and was making a great pretence of getting ready to start. Georgina, leaning out as Rosalind had done, waved her lily hand in frantic beckonings for her rescuers to follow faster. The motor chugged harder and harder. The car shook violently.

To the vivid imaginations of the passengers, the chase was as exciting as if the automobile were really plunging down the road instead of throbbing steadily in one spot in the dim garage. The gas rolling up from somewhere in the back made it wonderfully realistic. But out on the open road the smell of burning gasoline would not have been so overpowering. Inside the little box-like garage it began to close in on them and settle down like a dense fog.

Georgina coughed and Richard looked back apprehensively, feeling that something was wrong, and if that queer smoke didn't stop pouring out in such a thick cloud he'd have to shut off the engine or do something. Another moment passed and he leaned forward, fumbling for the key, but he couldn't find it. He had grown queerly confused and lightheaded. He couldn't make his fingers move where he wanted them to go.

He looked back at Georgina. She wasn't waving her hands any more. She was lying limply back on the seat as if too tired to play any longer. And a thousand miles away—at least it sounded that far—above the terrific noise the motor was making, he heard Captain Kidd barking. They were short, excited barks, so thin and queer, almost as thin and queer as if he were barking with the voice of a mosquito instead of his own.

And then—Richard heard nothing more, not even the noise of the motor. His hand dropped from the wheel, and he began slipping down, down from the seat to the floor of the car, white and limp, overcome like Georgina, by the fumes of the poisonous gas rolling up from the carburetor.

Mr. Milford, up in the hammock, had been vaguely conscious for several minutes of unusual sounds somewhere in the neighborhood, but it was not until he reached the end of the chapter that he took any intelligent notice. Then he looked up thinking somebody's machine was making a terrible fuss somewhere near. But it wasn't that sound which made him sit up in the hammock. It was Captain Kidd's frantic barking and yelping and whining as if something terrible was happening to him.

Standing up to stretch himself, then walking to the corner of the porch, Mr. Milford looked out. He could see the little terrier alternately scratching on the garage door and making frantic efforts to dig

under it. Evidently he felt left out and was trying desperately to join his little playmates, or else he felt that something was wrong inside.

Then it came to Mr. Milford in a flash that something *was* wrong inside. Nobody ever touched that machine but himself and the chauffeur, and the chauffeur, who was having a day off, was half-way to Yarmouth by this time. He didn't wait to go down by the steps. With one leap he was over the railing, crashing through the vines, and running down the terrace to the garage.

As he rolled back one of the sliding doors a suffocating burst of gas rushed into his face. He pushed both doors open wide, and with a hand over his mouth and nose hurried through the heavily-charged atmosphere to shut off the motor. The fresh air rushing in, began clearing away the fumes, and he seized Georgina and carried her out, thinking she would be revived by the time he was back with Richard. But neither child stirred from the grass where he stretched them out.

As he called for the cook and the housekeeper, there flashed into his mind an account he had read recently in a New York paper, of a man and his wife who had been asphyxiated in just such a way as this. Now thoroughly alarmed, he sent the cook running down the Green Stairs to summon Richard's father from the studio, and the housekeeper to telephone in various directions. Three doctors were there in a

miraculously short time, but despite all they could do at the end of half an hour both little figures still lay white and motionless.

Then the pulmotor that had been frantically telephoned for arrived from the life-saving station, and just as the man dashed up with that, Mrs. Triplett staggered up the terrace, her knees shaking so that she could scarcely manage to climb the last few steps.

Afterwards, the happenings of the day were very hazy in Georgina's mind. She had an indistinct recollection of being lifted in somebody's arms and moved about, and of feeling very sick and weak. Somebody said soothingly to somebody who was crying:

"Oh, the worst is over now. They're both beginning to come around."

Then she was in her own bed and the wild-cat from the banks of the Brazos was bending over her. At least, she thought it was the wild-cat, because she smelled the liniment as strongly as she did when she climbed up in the wagon beside it. But when she opened her eyes it was Tippy who was bending over her, smoothing her curls in a comforting, purry way, but the smell of liniment still hung in the air.

Then Georgina remembered something that must have happened before she was carried home from the bungalow.—Captain Kidd squirming out of Tippy's arms, and Tippy with the tears streaming down

her face trying to hold him and hug him as if he had been a person, and the Milford's cook saying: "If it hadn't been for the little beast's barkin' they'd have been dead in a few minutes more. Then there'd have been a double funeral, poor lambs."

Georgina smiled drowsily now and slipped off to sleep again, but later when she awakened the charm of the cook's phrase aroused her thoroughly, and she lay wondering what "a double funeral" was like. Would it have been at her house or Richard's? Would two little white coffins have stood side by side, or would each have been in its own place, with the two solemn processions meeting and joining at the foot of the Green Stairs. Maybe they would have put on her tombstone, "None knew her but to love her." No, that couldn't be said about her. She'd been wilfully disobedient too often for that, like the time she played with the Portuguese children on purpose to spite Tippy. She was sorry for that disobedience now, for she had discovered that Tippy was fonder of her than she had supposed. She had proved it by hugging Captain Kidd so gratefully for saving their lives, when she simply *loathed* dogs.

Somehow Georgina felt that she was better acquainted with Mrs. Triplett than she had ever been before, and fonder of her. Lying there in the dark she made several good resolutions. She was going to be a better girl in the future. She was going to do kind, lovely things for everybody, so that if an early

tomb should claim her, every heart in town would be saddened by her going. It would be lovely to leave a widespread heartache behind her. She wished she could live such a life that there wouldn't be a dry eye in the town when it was whispered from house to house that little Georgina Huntingdon was with the angels.

She pictured Belle's grief, and Uncle Darcy's and Richard's. She had already seen Tippy's. But it was a very different thing when she thought of Barby. There was no pleasure in imagining Barby's grief. There was something too real and sharp in the pain which darted into her own heart at the thought of it. She wanted to put her arms around her mother and ward off sorrow and trouble from her and keep all tears away from those dear eyes. She wanted to grow up and take care of her darling Barby and protect her from the Tishbite.

Suddenly it occurred to Georgina that in this escape she had been kept from the power of that mysterious evil which had threatened her ever since she called it forth by doing such a wicked thing as to use the "Sacred Book" to work a charm.

She had been put to bed in the daytime, hence her evening petitions were still unsaid. Now she pulled the covers over her head and included them all in one fervent appeal:

"And keep on delivering us from the Tishbite, forever and ever, Amen!"

CHAPTER XVI

WHAT THE STORM DID

NEXT morning nearly everyone in the town was talking about the storm. Belle said what with the booming of the waves against the breakwater and the wind rattling the shutters, she hadn't slept a wink all night. It seemed as if every gust would surely take the house off its foundations.

Old Jeremy reported that it was one of the worst wind-storms ever known along the Cape, wild enough to blow all the sand dunes into the sea. They'd had the best shaking up and shifting around that they'd had in years, he declared. Captain Ames' cranberry bog was buried so deep in sand you couldn't see a blossom or a leaf. And there was sand drifted all over the garden. It had whirled clear over the wall, till the bird pool was half full of it.

Georgina listened languidly, feeling very comfortable and important with her breakfast brought in to her on a tray. Tippy thought it was too chilly for her in the dining-room where there was no fire. Jeremy had kindled a cheerful blaze on the living-room hearth and his tales of damage done to the shipping and to roofs and chimneys about town,

seemed to emphasize her own safety and comfort. The only thing which made the storm seem a personal affair was the big limb blown off the willow tree.

Mrs. Triplett and Jeremy could remember a storm years ago which shifted the sand until the whole face of the Cape seemed changed. That was before the Government planted grass all over it, to bind it together with firm roots. Later when the ring of an axe told that the willow limb was being chopped in pieces, Georgina begged to be allowed to go outdoors.

"Let me go out and see the tracks of the storm," she urged. "I feel all right. I'm all over the gas now."

But Mrs. Triplett preferred to run no risks. All she said to Georgina was:

"No, after such a close call as you had yesterday you stay right here where I can keep an eye on you, and take it quietly for a day or two," but when she went into the next room Georgina heard her say to Belle:

"There's no knowing how that gas may have affected her heart."

Georgina made a face at the first speech, but the second one made her lie down languidly on the sofa with her finger on her pulse. She was half persuaded that there was something wrong with the way it beat, and was about to ask faintly if she couldn't have a little blackberry cordial with her lunch, when she

heard Richard's alley call outside and Captain Kidd's quick bark.

She started up, forgetting all about the cordial and her pulse, and was skipping to the front door when Tippy hurried in from the dining-room and reached it first. She had a piece of an old coffee sack in her hand.

"Here!" she said abruptly to Richard, who was so surprised at the sudden opening of the door that he nearly fell in against her.

"You catch that dog and hold him while I wipe his feet. I can't have any dirty quadruped like that, tracking up my clean floors."

Georgina looked at the performance in amazement. Tippy scrubbing away at Captain Kidd's muddy paws till all four of them were clean, and then actually letting him come into the house and curl up on the hearth! Tippy, who never touched dogs except with the end of a broom! She could scarcely believe what her own eyes told her. She and Richard must have had a "close call," indeed, closer than either of them realized, to make such a wonderful change in Tippy.

And the change was towards Richard, too. She had never seemed to like him much better than his dog. She blamed him for taking the cream bottles when they played pirate, and she thought it made little girls boisterous and rude to play with boys, and she wondered at Barby's letting Georgina play with

him. Several times she had done her wondering out loud, so that Georgina heard her, and wanted to say things back—shocking things, such as Rosa said to Joseph. But she never said them. There was always that old silver porringer, sitting prim and lady-like upon the sideboard.

Things were different to-day. After the dog's paws were wiped dry Tippy asked Richard how he felt after the accident, and she asked it as if she really cared and wanted to know. And she brought in a plate of early summer apples, the first in the market, and told him to help himself and put some in his pocket. And there was the checker-board if they wanted to play checkers or dominoes. Her unusual concern for their entertainment impressed Georgina more than anything else she could have done with the seriousness of the danger they had been in. She felt very solemn and important, and thanked Tippy with a sweet, patient air, befitting one who has just been brought up from the "valley of the shadow."

The moment they were alone Richard began breathlessly:

"Say. On the way here I went by that place where we buried the pouch, and what do you think? The markers are out of sight and the whole place itself is buried—just filled up level. What are we going to do about it?"

The seriousness of the situation did not impress Georgina until he added, "S'pose the person who lost

it comes back for it? Maybe we'd be put in prison."

"But nobody knows it's buried except you and me."

Richard scuffed one shoe against the other and looked into the fire.

"But Aunt Letty says there's no getting around it, 'Be sure your sin will find you out,' always. And I'm awfully unlucky that way. Seems to me I never did anything in my life that I oughtn't to a done, that I didn't get found out. Aunt Letty has a book that she reads to me sometimes when I'm going to bed, that proves it. Every story in it proves it. One is about a traveler who murdered a man, and kept it secret for twenty years. Then he gave it away, talking in his sleep. And one was a feather in a boy's coat pocket. It led to its being found out that he was a chicken thief. There's about forty such stories, and everyone of them prove your sin is sure to find you out some time before you die, even if you cover it up for years and years."

"But we didn't do any sin," protested Georgina. "We just buried a pouch that the dog found, to keep it safe, and if a big wind came along and covered it up so we can't find it, that isn't our fault. We didn't make the wind blow, did we?"

"But there was gold money in that pouch," insisted Richard, "and it wasn't ours, and maybe the letter was important and we ought to have turned it over to Dad or Uncle Darcy or the police or somebody."

Aunt Letty's bedtime efforts to keep Richard's conscience tender were far more effective than she had dreamed. He was quoting Aunt Letty now.

"We wouldn't want anybody to do *our* things that way." Then a thought of his own came to him, "You wouldn't want the police coming round and taking you off to the lockup, would you? I saw 'em take Binney Rogers one time, just because he broke a window that he didn't mean to. He was only shying a rock at a sparrow. There was a cop on each side of him a hold of his arm, and Binney's mother and sister were following along behind crying and begging them not to take him something awful. But all they could say didn't do a speck of good."

The picture carried weight. In spite of her light tone Georgina was impressed, but she said defiantly:

"Well, nobody saw us do it."

"You don't know," was the gloomy answer. "Somebody might have been up in the monument with a spy glass, looking down. There's always people up there spying around, or out on the masts in the harbor, and if some sleuth was put on the trail of that pouch the first thing that would happen would be he'd come across the very person with the glass. It always happens that way, and I know, because Binney Rogers has read almost all the detective stories there is, and he said so."

A feeling of uneasiness began to clutch at Georgina's interior. Richard spoke so knowingly and

convincingly that she felt a real need for blackberry cordial. But she said with a defiant little uplift of her chin:

"Well, as long as we didn't mean to do anything wrong, I'm not going to get scared about it. I'm just going to bear up and steer right on, and keep hoping that everything will turn out all right so hard that it will."

Her "line to live by" buoyed her up so successfully for the time being, that Richard, too, felt the cheerful influence of it, and passed to more cheerful subjects.

"We're going to be in all the papers," he announced. "A reporter called up from Boston to ask Cousin James how it happened. There's only been a few cases like ours in the whole United States. Won't you feel funny to see your name in the paper? Captain Kidd will have his name in, too. I heard Cousin James say over the telephone that he was the hero of the hour; that if he hadn't given the alarm we wouldn't have been discovered till it was too late."

Richard did not stay long. The finished portrait was to be hung in the Art gallery in the Town Hall that morning and he wanted to be on hand at the hanging. Later it would be sent to the New York exhibition.

"Daddy's going to let me go with him when Mr. Locke comes for him on his yacht. He's going to

take me because I sat still and let him get such a good picture. It's the best he's ever done. We'll be gone a week."

"When are you going?" demanded Georgina.

"Oh, in a few days, whenever Mr. Locke comes."

"I hope we can find that pouch first," she answered. Already she was beginning to feel little and forlorn and left behind. "It'll be awful lonesome with you and Barby both gone."

Tippy came in soon after Richard left and sat down at the secretary.

"I've been thinking I ought to write to your mother and let her know about yesterday's performance before she has a chance to hear it from outsiders or the papers. It's a whole week to-day since she left."

"A week," echoed Georgina. "Is that all? It seems a month at least. It's been so long."

Mrs. Triplett tossed her a calendar from the desk.

"Count it up for yourself," she said. "She left two days before your birthday and this is the Wednesday after."

While Mrs. Triplett began her letter Georgina studied the calendar, putting her finger on a date as she recalled the various happenings of it. Each day had been long and full. That one afternoon when she and Richard found the paper in the rifle seemed an age in itself. It seemed months since they had promised Belle and Uncle Darcy to keep the secret.

She glanced up, about to say so, then bit her tongue, startled at having so nearly betrayed the fact of their having a secret. Then the thought came to her that Emmett's sin had found him out in as strange a way as that of the man who talked in his sleep or the chicken thief to whom the feather clung. It was one more proof added to the forty in Aunt Letty's book. Richard's positiveness made a deeper impression on her than she liked to acknowledge. She shut her eyes a moment, squinting them up so tight that her eyelids wrinkled, and hoped as hard as she could hope that everything would turn out all right.

"What on earth is the matter with you, child?" exclaimed Tippy, looking up from her letter in time to catch Georgina with her face thus screwed into wrinkles.

Georgina opened her eyes with a start.

"Nothing," was the embarrassed answer. "I was just thinking."

CHAPTER XVII

IN THE KEEPING OF THE DUNES

SCARCELY had Georgina convinced herself by the calendar that it had been only one short week since Barby went away instead of the endlessly long time it seemed, than a letter was brought in to her.

"My Dear Little Rainbow-maker," it began.

"You are surely a prism your own self, for you have made a blessed bright spot in the world for me, ever since you came into it. I read your letter to papa, telling all about your birthday and the prism Uncle Darcy gave you. It cheered him up wonderfully. I was so proud of you when he said it was a fine letter, and that he'd have to engage you as a special correspondent on his paper some day.

"At first the doctors thought his sight was entirely destroyed, by the flying glass of the broken windshield, but now they are beginning to hope that one eye at least may be saved, and possibly the other. Papa is very doubtful about it himself, and gets very despondent at times. He had just been having an especially blue morning when your letter was brought in, and he said, when I read it:

" 'That *is* a good line to live by, daughter,' and he

had me get out his volume of Milton and read the whole sonnet that the line is taken from. The fact that Milton was blind when he wrote it made it specially interesting to him.

"He and mamma both need me sorely now for a little while, Baby dear, and if you can keep busy and happy without me I'll stay away a couple of weeks longer and help take him home to Kentucky, but I can't be contented to stay unless you send me a postal every day. If nothing more is on it than your name, written by your own little fingers, it will put a rainbow around my troubles and help me to be contented away from you."

Georgina spent the rest of the morning answering it. She had a feeling that she must make up for her father's neglect as a correspondent, by writing often herself. Maybe the family at Grandfather Shirley's wouldn't notice that there was never any letter with a Chinese stamp on it, addressed in a man's big hand in Barby's pile of mail, if there were others for her to smile over.

It had been four months since the last one came. Georgina had kept careful count, although she had not betrayed her interest except in the wistful way she watched Barby when the postman came. It made her throat ache to see that little shadow of disappointment creep into Barby's lovely gray eyes and then see her turn away with her lips pressed together tight for a moment before she began to hum or speak

brightly about something else. No Chinese letter had come in her absence to be forwarded.

Georgina wished her father could know how very much Barby cared about hearing from him. Maybe if his attention were called to it he would write oftener. If the editor of a big newspaper like Grandfather Shirley, thought her letters were good enough to print, maybe her father might pay attention to one of them. A resolve to write to him some day began to shape itself in her mind.

She would have been surprised could she have known that already one of her epistles was on its way to him. Barby had sent him the "rainbow letter." For Barby had not drawn off silent and hurt when his letters ceased to come, as many a woman would have done.

"Away off there in the interior he has missed the mails," she told herself. "Or the messenger he trusted may have failed to post his letters, or he may be ill. I'll not judge him until I know."

After Georgina's letter came she resolutely put her forebodings and misgivings aside many a time, prompted by it to steer onward so steadily that hope must do as Uncle Darcy said, "make rainbows even of her tears."

Georgina wrote on until dinner time, telling all about the way she had spent her birthday dollar. After dinner when the sunshine had dried all traces of the previous night's rain, she persuaded Tippy

that she was entirely over the effects of the gas, and perfectly able to go down street and select the picture postals with which to conduct her daily correspondence.

Richard joined her as she passed the bungalow. They made a thrilling afternoon for themselves by whispering to each other whenever any strange-looking person passed them, "S'pose *that* was the owner of the pouch and he was looking for us." The dread of their sin finding them out walked like a silent-footed ghost beside them all the way, making the two pairs of brown eyes steal furtive glances at each other now and then, and delicious little shivers of apprehension creep up and down their backs.

Whether it was the passing of the unseasonable weather into hot July sunshine again or whether the wild-cat liniment was responsible, no one undertook to say, but Mrs. Triplett's rheumatism left her suddenly, and at a time when she was specially glad to be rid of it. The Sewing Circle, to which she belonged, was preparing for a bazaar at the Church of the Pilgrims, and her part in it would keep her away from home most of the time for three days.

That is why Georgina had unlimited freedom for a while. She was left in Belle's charge, and Belle, still brooding over her troubles, listlessly assented to anything proposed to her. Belle had been allowed to go and come as she pleased when she was ten, and

she saw no reason why Georgina was not equally capable of taking care of herself.

Hardly was Mrs. Triplett out of sight that first morning when Georgina slipped out of the back gate with a long brass-handled fire-shovel, to meet Richard out on the dunes. He brought a hoe, and in his hand was the little compass imbedded in the nut.

When all was ready, according to Georgina's instructions, he turned around three times, then facing the east tossed the compass over his shoulder, saying solemnly, "Brother, go find your brother." She stood ready to mark the spot when it should fall, but Captain Kidd was ahead of her and had the nut in his teeth before she could reach the place where it had touched the ground. So Richard took the nut away and held the agitated little terrier by the collar while Georgina went through the same ceremony.

This time Richard reached the nut before the dog, and drew a circle around the spot where it had lain. Then he began digging into the sand with the hoe so industriously that Captain Kidd was moved to frantic barking.

"Here, get to work yourself and keep quiet," ordered Richard. "Rats! You'll have Cousin James coming out to see what we're doing, first thing you know. He thinks something is the matter now, every time you bark. Rats! I say."

The magic word had its effect. After an instant

of quivering eagerness the dog pounced into the hole which Richard had started, and sent the sand flying furiously around him with his active little paws. Georgina dragged the accumulating piles aside with the fire-shovel on one side, and Richard plied the hoe on the other. When the hole grew too deep for Captain Kidd to dig in longer, Richard stepped in and went deeper. But it was unsatisfactory work. The shifting sand, dry as powder at this depth, was constantly caving in and filling up the space.

They tried making new holes, to the north of the old one, then to the south, then on the remaining sides. They were still at it when the whistle at the cold-storage plant blew for noon. Georgina rubbed a sleeve across her red, perspiring face, and shook the ends of her curls up and down to cool her hot neck.

"I don't see how we can dig any more to-day," she said wearily. "The sun is blistering. I feel all scorched."

"I've had enough," confessed Richard. "But we've got to find that pouch."

After a moment's rest, leaning on the hoe-handle, he had an inspiration. "Let's get Manuel and Joseph and Rosa to help us. They'd dig all day for a nickel."

"I haven't one nickel left," said Georgina. Then she thought a moment. "But I could bring some jelly-roll. Those Fayals would dig for eats as quick

as they would for money. I'll tell Belle we're going to have a sort of a picnic over here and she'll let me bring all that's left in the cake box."

Richard investigated his pockets. A solitary nickel was all he could turn out. "Two cents for each of the boys and one for Rosa," he said, but Georgina shook her head.

"Rosa would make trouble if you divided that way. She'd howl till somebody came to see what was the matter. But we could do this way. The one who gets the least money gets the most jelly-roll. We'll wait till the digging is over and then let them divide it to suit themselves."

By five o'clock that afternoon, the compass had been sent to "hunt brother" in a hundred different places, and the hollow circled by the bayberry bushes and beach plums where the pouch had been hidden filled with deep holes. Captain Kidd had responded to the repeated call of "Rats" until the magic word had lost all charm for him. Even a dog comes to understand in time when a fellow creature has "an axe to grind." Finally, he went off and lay down, merely wagging his tail in a bored way when any further effort was made to arouse his enthusiasm.

The Fayal children, working valiantly in the trenches, laid down arms at last and strolled home, their faces streaked with jelly-roll, and Georgina went wearily up the beach, dragging her fire-shovel after her. She felt that she had had enough of the

dunes to last her the rest of her natural lifetime. She seemed to see piles of sand even when she looked at the water or when her eyes were shut.

"But we won't give up," she said staunchly as she parted from Richard. "We're obliged to find that pouch, so we've *got* to keep hope at the prow."

"Pity all this good digging has to be wasted," said Richard, looking around at the various holes. "If it had all been in one place, straight down, it would have been deep enough to strike a pirate's chest by this time. I hope they'll fill up before anybody comes this way to notice them."

"Somehow, I'm not so anxious as I was to go off 'a-piratin' so bold,' " said Georgina with a tired sigh. "I've had enough digging to last me forever and always, amen."

The Fayal children, surfeited with one afternoon of such effort, and not altogether satisfied as to the division of wages which had led to war in their midst, did not come back to the Place of the Pouch next morning, but Richard and Georgina appeared promptly, albeit with sore muscles and ebbing enthusiasm. Only stern necessity and fear of consequences kept them at their task.

Cousin James had reported that there was a fishing vessel in that morning with two enormous horse mackerel in the catch, which were to be cut up and salted at Railroad wharf. It was deliciously cool down on the wharf, with the breeze blowing off the

water through the great packing shed, and the white sails scudding past the open doors like fans. With Mrs. Triplett busy with the affairs of the Bazaar, it would have been a wonderful opportunity for Georgina to have gone loitering along the pier, watching the summer people start off in motor boats or spread themselves lazily under flapping sails for a trip around the harbor.

But something of the grim spirit of their ancestors, typified by the monument looking down on them from the hill, nerved both Richard and Georgina one more time to answer to the stern call of Duty.

CHAPTER XVIII

FOUND OUT

"I DREAMED about that old pouch last night," said Richard in one of the intervals of rest which they allowed themselves.

"I dreamed that it belonged to a Chinese man with crooked, yellow finger-nails a foot long. He came and stood over my bed and said that because there was important news in that letter and we buried it, and kept it from going to where it ought to go, *we* had to be buried alive. And he picked me up like I was that nut and tossed me over his shoulder, and said, 'Brother, go find your brother.' And I began sinking down in the sand deeper and deeper until I began to smother."

Georgina made no answer. The dream did not impress her as being at all terrifying. She had swung her prism around her neck that morning when she dressed, and now while she rested she amused herself by flashing the bars of color across Captain Kidd. Richard resented her lack of interest.

"Well, it may not sound very bad out here in the daylight, but you ought to have *had* it. I yelled until Daddy shook me and told me I'd wake up the whole

end of town with such a nightmare. If you'd have seen that old Chinaman's face like a dragon's, you'd understand why I feel that we've just got to find that pouch. It's going to get us into some kind of trouble, certain sure, if we don't."

Georgina rose to begin digging again. "It's lucky nobody ever comes this way to see all these holes," she began, but stopped with her shovel half lifted. A familiar voice from the circle of bushes at the top of the dune called down cheerily:

"Ship ahoy, mates. What port are you bound for now? Digging through to China?"

"It's Uncle Darcy!" they exclaimed in the same breath. He came plunging down the side of the dune before they could recover from their confusion. There was a pail of blueberries in each hand. He had been down the state road picking them, and was now on his way to the Gray Inn to sell them to the housekeeper. Leaving the pails in a level spot under the shade of a scrubby bush, he came on to where the children were standing, and eased himself stiffly down to a seat on the sand. It amused him to see their evident embarrassment, and his eyes twinkled as he inquired:

"What mischief are you up to now, digging all those gopher holes?"

Neither answered for a moment, then Georgina gulped and found her voice. "It's—it's a secret," she managed to say.

"Oh," he answered, growing instantly grave at the sound of that word. "Then I mustn't ask any questions. We must always keep our secrets. Sometimes it's a pity though, when one has to promise to do so. I hope yours isn't the burden to you that mine is to me."

This was the first time he had spoken to them of the promise they had made to him and Belle. With a look all around as if to make certain the coast was clear, he said:

"There's something I've been wanting to say to you children ever since that day you had the rifle, and now's as good a chance as any. I want you to know that I never would have promised what I did if it could have made any possible difference to Mother. But lately she seems all confused about Danny's trouble. She seems to have forgotten there was any trouble except that he went away from home. For months she's been looking for him to walk in most any day.

"Ever since I gave my word to Belle, I've been studying over the right and wrong of it. I felt I wasn't acting fair to Danny. But now it's clear in my mind that it *was* the right thing to do. I argue it this way. Danny cared so much about saving Emmett from disgrace and Belle from the pain of finding it out, that he was willing to give up his home and good name and everything. Now it wouldn't be fair to him to make that sacrifice in vain by telling

while it can still be such a death-blow to Emmett's father and hurt Belle much as ever. She's gone on all these years fairly worshiping Emmett's memory for being such a hero."

Uncle Darcy stopped suddenly and seemed to be drawn far away from them as if he had gone inside of himself with his own thoughts and forgotten their presence. Georgina sat and fanned herself with her shade hat. Richard fumbled with the little compass, rolling it from one hand to the other, without giving any thought to what he was doing. Presently it rolled away from him and Captain Kidd darted after it, striking it with his forepaws as he landed on it, and thus rolling it still farther till it stopped at the old man's feet.

Recalled to his surroundings in this way, Uncle Darcy glanced at the object indifferently, but something strangely familiar in its appearance made him lean closer and give it another look. He picked it up, examining it eagerly. Then he stood up and gazed all around as if it had dropped from the sky and he expected to see the hand that had dropped it.

"Where did you get this?" he demanded huskily, in such a queer, breathless way that Richard thought his day of reckoning had come. His sin had found him out. He looked at Georgina helplessly.

"Yes, tell!" she exclaimed, answering his look.

"I—I—just *played* it was mine," he began. "'Cause the initials on it are the same as mine when

we play pirate and I'm Dare-devil Dick. I was only going to keep it till we dug up the pouch again. We were keeping it to help find the pouch like Tom Sawyer did——"

It seemed to Richard that Uncle Darcy's hand, clutching his shoulder, was even more threatening than the Chinaman's of his nightmare, and his voice more imperative.

"Tell me! Where did you get it? *That's my compass! I* scratched those letters on that nut. 'D. D.' stands for Dan'l Darcy. I brought it home from my last voyage. 'Twas a good-luck nut they told me in the last port I sailed from. It was one of the first things Danny ever played with. There's the marks of his first little tooth under those letters. I gave it to him when he got old enough to claim it, for the letters were his, too. He always carried it in his pocket and *he had it with him when he went away*. For the love of heaven, child, tell me where you found it?"

The hand which clutched Richard's shoulder was shaking as violently as it had the day the old rifle gave up its secret, and Richard, feeling the same unnamable terror he had felt in his nightmare, could only stammer, "I—I don't know. Captain Kidd found it."

Then all three of them started violently, for a hearty voice just behind them called out unexpectedly:

"Hullo, what's all the excitement about?"

It was Captain James Milford, who had strolled down from the bungalow, his hat stuck jauntily on the back of his head, and his hands in his pockets. A few moments before he had been scanning the harbor through a long spy-glass, and happening to turn it towards the dunes had seen the two children digging diligently with shovel and hoe.

"Looks as if they'd started to honey-comb the whole Cape with holes," he thought. "Curious how many things kids of that age can think of. It might be well to step down and see what they're about."

He put up the spy-glass and started down, approaching them on one side as the Towncrier reached them on the other.

"Now for a yarn that'll make their eyes stand out," he thought with a smile as he saw the old man sit down on the sand.

"Wonder if it would sound as thrilling now as it did when I was Dick's age. I believe I'll just slip up and listen to one for old times' sake."

Uncle Darcy let go of Richard's shoulder and turned to the newcomer appealingly.

"Jimmy," he said with a choke in his voice. "Look at this! The first trace of my boy since he left me, and they can't tell me where they got it."

He held out the compass and Mr. Milford took it from his trembling fingers.

"Why, *I* remember this old trinket, Uncle Dan'l!"

exclaimed Mr. Milford. "You let me carry it in my pocket one day when I was no bigger than Dicky, here, when you took me fishing with you. I thought it was responsible for my luck, for I made my first big catch that day. Got a mackerel that I bragged about all season."

Uncle Darcy seized the man's arm with the same desperate grip which had held the boy's.

"You don't seem to understand!" he exclaimed. "I'm trying to tell you that *Danny* is mixed up with this in some way. Either he's been near here or somebody else has who's seen him. He had this with him when he went away, I tell you. These children say they took it out of a pouch that the dog found. Help me, Jimmy. I can't seem to think——"

He sat weakly down on the sand again, his head in his hands, and Mr. Milford, deeply interested, turned to the children. His questions called out a confusing and involved account, told piecemeal by Georgina and Richard in turn.

"Hold on, now, let's get the straight of this," he interrupted, growing more bewildered as the story proceeded. "What was in the pouch besides the gold pieces, the other money and this compass?"

"A letter with a foreign stamp on it," answered Richard. "I noticed specially, because I have a stamp almost like it in my album."

On being closely cross-questioned he could not say positively to what country the stamp belonged.

He thought it was Siam or China. Georgina recalled several names of towns partially scratched out on the back of the envelope, and the word Texas. She was sure of that and of "Mass." and of "Mrs. Henry——" something or other.

"But the inside of the letter," persisted Mr. Milford. "Didn't you try to read that?"

"Course not," said Georgina, her head indignantly high. "We only looked at each end of it to see if the person's name was on it, but it began, 'Dear friend,' and ended, 'Your grateful friend Dave.' "

"So the letter was addressed *'Mrs.,'* " began Mr. Milford, musingly, "but was in a tobacco pouch. The first fact argues that a woman lost it, the last that it was a man."

"But it didn't smell of tobacco," volunteered Georgina. "It was nice and clean only where Captain Kidd chewed the string."

"I suppose it didn't have any smell at all," said Mr. Milford, not as if he expected anyone to remember, but that he happened to think of it. A slowly dawning recollection began to brighten in Georgina's eyes.

"But it did have a smell," she exclaimed. "I remember it perfectly well now. Don't you know, Richard, when you were untying it at the top of the steps I said 'Phew! that makes me think of the liniment I bought from the wild-cat woman last night,' I had to hold the bottle in my lap all the time we were at the moving picture show so I had a chance

to get pretty well acquainted with that smell. And afterwards when we were wrapping the tin foil around the pouch, getting ready to bury it we both turned up our noses at the way it smelled. It seemed stronger when the sun shone on it."

"The wild-cat woman," repeated Mr. Milford, turning on Georgina. "Where was she? What did you have to do with her? Was the dog with you?"

Little by little they began to recall the evening, how they had started to the show with the Fayal family and turned aside to hear the patent medicine man sing, how Richard and Georgina had dared each other to touch the wild-cat's tail through the bars, and how Georgina in climbing down from the wheel had stumbled over Captain Kidd whom they thought safely shut up at home.

"I believe we've found a clue," said Mr. Milford at last. "If anybody in town had lost it there'd have been a notice put up in the post-office or the owner would have been around for you to cry it, Uncle Dan'l. But if it's the wild-cat woman's she probably did not discover her loss till she was well out of town, and maybe not until she reached her next stopping-place."

"There's been nothing of the sort posted on the bulletin board at the post-office," said the old man. "I always glance in at it every morning."

Mr. Milford looked at him thoughtfully as if considering something. Then he said slowly:

"Uncle Dan'l, just how much would it mean to you to find the owner of that pouch?"

"Why, Jimmy," was the tremulous answer, "if it led to any trace of my boy it would be the one great hope of my life realized."

"You are quite sure that you *want* to bring him back? That it would be best for all concerned?" he continued meaningly.

There was a silence, then the old man answered with dignity:

"I know what you're thinking of, and considering all that's gone before, I'm not blaming you, but I can tell you this, Jimmy Milford. If the town could know all that I know it'd be glad and proud to have my boy brought back to it."

He smote the fist of one hand into the palm of the other and looked about like something trapped, seeking escape.

"It isn't fair!" he exclaimed. "It isn't fair! Him worthy to hold up his head with the best of them, and me bound not to tell. But I've given my promise," he added, shaking his head slowly from side to side. "I s'pose it'll all work out for the best, somehow, in the Lord's own good time, but I can't seem to see the justice in it now."

He sat staring dejectedly ahead of him with dim, appealing eyes.

The younger man took a step forward and laid an arm across the bent shoulders.

"All right, Uncle Dan'l," he said heartily. "If there's anything under the sun I can do to help you I'm going to do it, beginning right now. Come on up to the house and I'll begin this Sherlock Holmes business by telephoning down the Cape to every town on it till we locate this wild-cat liniment wagon, and then we'll get after it as fast as the best automobile in Provincetown can take us."

CHAPTER XIX

TRACING THE LINIMENT WAGON

TO Wellfleet, to Orleans, to Chatham went the telephone call, to Harwichport and then back again to the little towns on the bay side of the Cape, for the wild-cat and its keepers did not follow a straight course in their meanderings. It was some time before Mr. Milford succeeded in locating them. At last he hung up the receiver announcing:

"They showed in Orleans last night all right, but it wasn't the road to Chatham they took out of there this morning. It was to Brewster. We can easily overtake them somewhere along in that direction and get back home before dark."

There was one ecstatic moment for Georgina when it was made clear to her that she was included in that "we"; that she was actually to have a share in an automobile chase like the ones that had thrilled her in the movies. But that moment was soon over.

"I hardly know what to do about leaving Mother," began Uncle Darcy in a troubled voice. "She's feeling uncommon poorly to-day—she's in bed and can't seem to remember anything longer than you're telling it. Mrs. Saggs came in to sit with her while I

was out blueberrying, but she said she couldn't stay past ten o'clock. She has company coming."

"Couldn't you get some of the other neighbors to come in for the few hours you'd be away?" asked Mr. Milford. "It's important you should follow up this clue yourself."

"No, Mrs. Saggs is the only one who keeps Mother from fretting when I'm away from her. Her side window looks right into our front yard, and ordinarily it would be enough just for her to call across to her now and then, but it wouldn't do to-day, Mother not being as well as common. She'd forget where I was gone and I couldn't bear to have her lying there frightened and worried and not remembering why I had left her alone. She's like a child at times. *You* know how it is," he said, turning to Georgina. "Not flighty, but just needing to be soothed and talked to."

Georgina nodded. She knew, for on several occasions she had sat beside Aunt Elspeth when she was in such a mood, and had quieted and pleased her with little songs and simple rhymes. She knew she could do it again to-day as effectually as Mrs. Saggs, if it wasn't for giving up that exciting motor chase after the wild-cat woman. It seemed to her a greater sacrifice than flesh and blood should be called upon to make. She sat on the porch step, twirling her prism carelessly on its pink ribbon while she waited for the machine to be brought around.

Then she climbed into the back seat with Uncle Darcy and the two pails of blueberries, while Richard settled himself and Captain Kidd in front with his Cousin James.

They whirled up to the Gray Inn to leave the blueberries, and then around down Bradford Street to Fishburn Court to attempt to explain to Aunt Elspeth. On the way they passed the Pilgrim monument. Georgina tried not to look at it, but she couldn't help glancing up at it from the corner of her eye.

"You must," it seemed to say to her.

"I won't," she as silently answered back.

"It's your duty," it reminded her, "and the idea of a descendant of one of the Pilgrim Fathers and one of the Minute-men shirking her duty. A pretty member of the Rainbow Club *you* are," it scoffed.

They whirled by the grim monster of a monument quickly, but Georgina felt impelled to turn and look back at it, her gaze following it up higher and higher, above the gargoyles, to the tipmost stones which seemed to touch the sky.

"I hate that word Duty," she said savagely to herself. "It's as big and ugly and as always-in-front-of-you as that old monument. They're exactly alike. You can't help seeing them no matter which way you look or how hard you try not to."

At the gate she tried to put the obnoxious word out of her mind by leaning luxuriously back in the

car and looking up at the chimney tops while Uncle Darcy stepped out and went into the house. He came out again almost immediately, crossed the little front yard and put his head in at Mrs. Saggs' side window. After a short conversation with her he came out to the gate and stood irresolutely fingering the latch.

"I don't know what to do," he repeated, his voice even more troubled than before. "Mother's asleep now. Mrs. Saggs says she'll go over at twelve and take her her tea, but—I can't help feeling I ought not to leave her alone for so long. Couldn't you manage without me?"

And then, Georgina inwardly protesting, "I don't want to and I won't," found herself stepping out of the car, and heard her own voice saying sweetly:

"I'll stay with Aunt Elspeth, Uncle Darcy. I can keep her from fretting."

A smile of relief broke over the old man's face and he said heartily:

"Why, of course you can, honey. It never occurred to me to ask a little lass like you to stop and care for her, but you can do it better than anybody else, because Mother's so fond of you."

Neither had it occurred to him or to either of the others that it was a sacrifice for her to give up this ride. There was not a word from anyone about its being a noble thing for her to do. Mr. Milford, in a hurry to be off, merely nodded his satisfaction at

having the matter arranged so quickly. Uncle Darcy stepped back to the window for a parting word with Mrs. Saggs.

"She'll keep an ear out for you, Georgina," he said as he went back to the car. "Just call her if you want her for any reason. There's plenty cooked in the cupboard for your dinner, and Mrs. Saggs will tend to Mother's tea when the time comes. When she wakes up and asks for me best not tell her I'm out of town. Just say I'll be back bye and bye, and humor her along that way."

And then they were off with a whirr and a clang that sent the chickens in the road scattering in every direction. Georgina was left standing by the gate thinking, "What made me do it? What *made* me do it? I don't want to stay one bit."

The odor of gasoline cleared away and the usual Sabbath-like stillness settled down over all the court. She walked slowly across the shady little grass plot to the front door, hesitated there a moment, then went into the cottage and took off her hat.

A glance into the dim bedroom beyond showed her Aunt Elspeth's white head lying motionless on her pillow. The sight of the quiet sleeper made her feel appallingly lonesome. It was like being all by herself in the house to be there with one who made no sound or movement. She would have to find something to do. It was only eleven o'clock. She tiptoed out into the kitchen.

The almanac had been left lying on the table. She looked slowly through it, and was rewarded by finding something of interest. On the last page was a column of riddles, and one of them was so good she started to memorize it so that she could propound it to Richard. She was sure he never could guess it. Finding it harder to remember than it seemed at first glance, she decided to copy it. She did not know where to look for a sheet of paper, but remembered several paper bags on the pantry shelves, so she went in search of one. Finding one with only a cupful of sugar left in it, she tore off the top and wrote the riddle on that with a stub of a pencil which she found on the table.

While searching for the bag she took an inventory of the supplies in the pantry from which she was to choose her dinner. When she had finished copying the riddle she went back to them. There were baked beans and blueberry pie, cold biscuit and a dish of honey.

"I'll get my dinner now," she decided, "then I'll be ready to sit with Aunt Elspeth when her tea comes."

As Georgina went back and forth from table to shelf it was in unconscious imitation of Mrs. Triplett's brisk manner. Pattering after that capable housekeeper on her busy rounds as persistently as Georgina had done all her life, had taught her to move in the same way. Presently she discovered that

there was a fire laid in the little wood stove ready to light. The stove was so small in comparison to the big kitchen range at home, that it appealed to Georgina as a toy stove might have done. She stood looking at it thinking what fun it would be to cook something on it all by herself with no Tippy standing by to say do this or don't do the other.

"I think I ought to be allowed to have some fun to make up for my disappointment," she said to herself as the temptation grew stronger and stronger.

"I could cook me an egg. Tippy lets me beat them but she never lets me break them and I've always wanted to break one and let it go plunk into the pan."

She did not resist the temptation long. There was the sputter of a match, the puff of a flame, and the little stove was roaring away so effectively that one of old Jeremy's sayings rose to her lips. Jeremy had a proverb for everything.

"Little pot, soon hot," she said out loud, gleefully, and reached into the cupboard for the crock of bran in which the eggs were kept. Then Georgina's skill as an actor showed itself again, although she was not conscious of imitating anyone. In Tippy's best manner she wiped out the frying-pan, settled it in a hot place on the stove, dropped in a bit of butter.

With the assured air of one who has had long practice, she picked up an egg and gave it a sharp crack on the edge of the pan, expecting it to part

evenly into halves and its contents to glide properly into the butter. It looked so alluringly simple and easy that she had always resented Tippy's saying she would make a mess of it if she tried to do it. But mess was the only name which could be given to what poured out on the top of the stove as her fingers went crashing through the shell and into the slimy feeling contents. The broken yolk dripped from her hands, and in the one instant she stood holding them out from her in disgust, all the rest of the egg which had gone sliding over the stove, cooked, scorched and turned to a cinder.

The smell and smoke of the burning egg rose to the ceiling and filled the room. Georgina sprang to close the door so that the odor would not rouse Aunt Elspeth, and then with carving knife and stove-lid lifter, she scraped the charred remains into the fire.

"And it looked *so* easy," she mourned. "Maybe I didn't whack it quickly enough. I'm going to try again." She felt into the bran for another egg. This time she struck the shell so hard that its contents splashed out sideways with an unexpected squirt and slid to the floor. She was ready to cry as she wiped up the slippery stuff, but there came to her mind some verses which Tippy had taught her long ago. And so determined had Tippy been for her to learn them, that she offered the inducement of a string of blue beads. The name of the poem was "Perseverance," and it began:

"Here's a lesson all should heed——
Try, try again.
If at first you don't succeed,
Try, try again."

and it ended,

"That which other folks can do
Why with patience may not you?
Try, try again."

Tippy sowed that seed the same winter that she taught Georgina "The Landing of the Pilgrims"; but surely, no matter how long a time since then, Tippy should be held accountable for the after effects of that planting. If Georgina persevered it was no more than could be expected considering her rigorous up-bringing.

Georgina pushed the frying-pan to the back of the stove where it was cooler, and with her red lips pursed into a tight line, chose another egg, smote it sharply on the edge of the pan, thereby cracking it and breaking the shell into halves. Her thumbs punched through into the yolk of this one also, but by letting part of the shell drop with it, she managed to land it all in the pan. That was better. She fished out the fragment of shell and took another egg.

This time the feat was accomplished as deftly as an expert chef could have done it, and a pleased smile

took the place of the grim determination on Georgina's face. Elated by her success she broke another egg, then another and another. It was as easy as breathing or winking. She broke another for the pure joy of putting her dexterity to the test once more. Then she stopped, appalled by the pile of empty shells confronting her accusingly. She counted them. She had broken eight—three-fourths of a setting. What would Uncle Darcy say to such a wicked waste? She could burn the shells, but what an awful lot of insides to dispose of. All mixed up as they were, they couldn't be saved for cake. There was nothing to do but to scramble them.

Scramble them she did, and the pan seemed to grow fuller and fuller as she tossed the fluffy mass about with a fork. It was fun doing that. She made the most of this short space of time, and it was over all too soon. She knew that Aunt Elspeth had grown tired of eggs early in the summer. There was no use saving any for her. Georgina herself was not especially fond of them, but she would have to eat all she could to keep them from being wasted.

Some time after she rose from the table and looked at the dish with a feeling of disgust that there could still be such a quantity left, after she had eaten so much that it was impossible to enjoy even a taste of the blueberry pie or the honey. Carrying the dish out through the back door she emptied it into the cats' pan, fervently wishing that John and Mary

Darcy and old Yellownose could dispose of it all without being made ill.

Long ago she had learned to do her sums in the sand. Now she stooped down and with the handle of her spoon scratched some figures in the path. "If twelve eggs cost thirty cents, how much will eight eggs cost?" That was the sum she set for herself. Only that morning she had heard Tippy inquire the price of eggs from the butter-woman, and say they were unusually high and hard to get because they were so many summer people in town this season. She didn't know where they were going to get enough for all the cakes necessary for the Bazaar.

It took Georgina some time to solve the problem. Then going back to the kitchen she gathered up all the shells and dropped them into the fire. Her sacrifice was costing her far more than she had anticipated. Somehow, somewhere, she must get hold of twenty cents to pay for those eggs. Duty again. *Always* Duty. But for that one horrid word she would be racing down the road to Brewster in the wake of the wild-cat woman. She wondered if they had caught up with her yet.

CHAPTER XX

DANCE OF THE RAINBOW FAIRIES

GEORGINA, intent on washing the frying-pan and cleaning the last vestige of burnt egg from the top of the stove, did not hear Mrs. Saggs come in at the front door with Aunt Elspeth's dinner on a tray. Nor did she hear the murmur of voices that went on while it was being eaten. The bedroom was in the front of the house, and the rasping noise she was making as she scratched away with the edge of an iron spoon, kept her from hearing anything else. So when the door into the kitchen suddenly opened it gave her such a start that she dropped the dishcloth into the woodbox.

Mrs. Saggs sniffed suspiciously. There was something reproachful in the mere tilt of her nose which Georgina felt and resented.

"I thought I smelled something burning."

"I s'pect you did," Georgina answered calmly. "But it's all over now. I was getting my dinner early, so's I could sit with Aunt Elspeth afterward."

Mrs. Saggs had both hands full, as she was carrying her tray, so she could not open the stove to look in; but she walked over towards it and peered at it from a closer viewpoint, continuing to sniff. But there was nothing for her to discover, no clue to the

smell. Everything which Georgina had used was washed and back in place now. The sharp eyes made a survey of the kitchen, watching Georgina narrowly as the child, having rinsed the dishcloth after its fall, leaned out of the back door to hang it on a bush in the sun, as Uncle Darcy always did.

"You've been taught to be real neat, haven't you?" she said in an approving tone which made Georgina like her better. Then her glance fell on a work-basket which had been left sitting on top of the flour barrel. In it was a piece of half-finished mending. The sharp eyes softened.

"I declare!" she exclaimed. "It's downright pitiful the way that old man tries to do for himself and his poor old wife. It's surprising, though, how well he gets along with the housework and taking care of her and all."

She glanced again at the needle left sticking in the clumsy unfinished seam, and recognized the garment.

"Well, I wish you'd look at that! Even trying to patch her poor old nightgown for her! Can you beat that? Here, child, give it to me. My hands are full with this tray, so just stick it under my arm. I'll mend it this afternoon while I'm setting talking to the company."

She tightened her grip on the bundle which Georgina thrust under her arm, and looked down at it.

"Them pitiful old stiff fingers of his'n!" she exclaimed. "They sure make a botch of sewing, but

they don't ever make a botch of being kind. Well, I'm off now. Guess you'd better run in and set with Mis' Darcy for a spell, for she's waked up real natural and knowing now, and seems to crave company."

Georgina went, but paused on the way, seeing the familiar rooms in a new light, since Mrs. Saggs' remarks had given her new and illuminating insight. Everywhere she looked there was something as eloquent as that bit of unfinished mending to bear witness that Uncle Darcy was far more than just a weather-beaten old man with a smile and word of cheer for everybody. Ringing the Towncrier's bell and fishing and blueberrying and telling yarns and helping everybody bear their trouble was the least part of his doings. That was only what the world saw. That was all she had seen herself until this moment.

Now she was suddenly aware of his bigness of soul which made him capable of an infinite tenderness and capacity to serve. His devotion to Aunt Elspeth spread an encircling care around her as a great oak throws the arms of its shade, till her comfort was his constant thought, her happiness his greatest desire.

"Them pitiful, old, stiff fingers of his'n!" How could Mrs. Saggs speak of them so? They were heroic, effectual fingers. Theirs was something far greater than the Midas touch—they transmuted the smallest service into Love's gold.

Georgina, with her long stretching up to books that

were "over her head," understood this without being able to put it into words. Nor could she put into words the longing which seized her like a dull ache, for *Barby* to be loved and cared for like that, to be as constantly and supremely considered. She couldn't understand how Aunt Elspeth, old and wrinkled and childish, could be the object of such wonderful devotion, and Barby, her adorable, winsome Barby, call forth less.

"Not one letter in four long months," she thought bitterly.

"Dan'l," called Aunt Elspeth feebly from the next room, and Georgina went in to assure her that Uncle Darcy was *not* out in the boat and would not be brought home drowned. He was attending to some important business and would be back bye and bye. In the meantime, she was going to hang her prism in the window where the sun could touch it and let the rainbow fairies dance over the bed.

The gay flashes of color, darting like elfin wings here and there as Georgina twisted the ribbon, pleased Aunt Elspeth as if she were a child. She lifted a thin, shriveled hand to catch at them and gave a weak little laugh each time they eluded her grasp. It was such a thin hand, almost transparent, with thick, purplish veins standing out on it. Georgina glanced at her own and wondered if Aunt Elspeth's ever could have been dimpled and soft like hers. It did not seem possible that this frail old

woman with the snowy-white hair and sunken cheeks could ever have been a rosy child like herself. As if in answer to her thought, Aunt Elspeth spoke, groping again with weak, ineffectual passes after the rainbows.

"I can't catch them. They bob around so. That's the way I used to be, always on the move. They called me 'Bouncing Bet!' "

"Tell me about that time," urged Georgina. Back among early memories Aunt Elspeth's mind walked with firm, unfailing tread. It was only among those of later years that she hesitated and groped her way as if lost in fog. By the time the clock had struck the hours twice more Georgina felt that she knew intimately a mischievous girl whom her family called Bouncing Bet for her wild ways, but who bore no trace of a resemblance to the feeble old creature who recounted her pranks.

And the blue-eyed romp who could sail a boat like a boy or swim like a mackerel grew up into a slender slip of a lass with a shy grace which made one think of a wild-flower. At least that is what the old daguerreotype showed Georgina when Aunt Elspeth sent her rummaging through a trunk to find it. It was taken in a white dress standing beside a young sailor in his uniform. No wonder Uncle Darcy looked proud in the picture. But Georgina never would have known it was Uncle Darcy if she hadn't been told. He had changed, too.

The picture make Georgina think of one of Barby's songs, and presently when Aunt Elspeth was tired of talking she sang it to her:

"Hand in hand when our life was May.
Hand in hand when our hair is gray.
Sorrow and sun for everyone
As the years roll on.
Hand in hand when the long night tide
Gently covers us side by side——
Ah, lad, though we know not when,
Love will be with us forever then.
Always the same, Darby my own,
Always the same to your old wife Joan!"

After that there were other songs which Aunt Elspeth asked for, "Oh, wert thou in the cauld blast," and "Robin Adair." Then came a long tiresome pause when Georgina didn't know what to do next, and Aunt Elspeth turned her head restlessly on the pillow and seemed uneasy.

Georgina wished with all her heart she was out of the stuffy little bedroom. If she had gone with the others, she would be speeding along the smooth, white road now, coming home from Brewster, with the wind and sunshine of all the wide, free outdoors around her.

Aunt Elspeth drew a long, tired sigh.

"Maybe you'd like me to read to you," ventured Georgina. She hesitated over making such an offer, because there were so few books in the house. Nothing but the almanac looked interesting. Aunt Elspeth assented, and pointed out a worn little volume of devotions on top of the bureau, saying:

"That's what Dan'l reads me on Sundays."

Georgina opened it. Evidently it had been compiled for the use of sea-faring people, for it was full of the promises that sailor-folk best understand; none of the shepherd psalms or talk of green pastures and help-giving hills. It was all about mighty waters and paths through the deep. She settled herself comfortably in the low rocking-chair beside the bed, tossed back her curls and was about to begin, when one of the rainbow lights from the prism danced across the page. She waited, smiling, until it glimmered away. Then she read the verses on which it had shone.

"All thy waves and thy billows are gone over me, yet the Lord will command His loving kindness in the daytime, and in the night His song shall be with me."

The sweet little voice soothed the troubled spirit that listened like music.

"When thou passeth through the waters I will be with thee, and through the rivers: they shall not overflow thee. . . . Thus saith the Lord which maketh a way in the sea, and a path in the mighty waters."

Aunt Elspeth reached out a groping hand for Georgina's and took the soft little fingers in hers. Georgina didn't want to have her hand held, especially in such a stiff, bony clasp. It made her uncomfortable to sit with her arm stretched up in such a position, but she was too polite to withdraw it, so she read on for several pages.

"He maketh the storm a calm, so that the waves thereof are still. So He bringeth them into their desired haven."

Attracted by the sound of heavy breathing, she looked up. Aunt Elspeth was asleep. Georgina laid the book on the table, and slowly, very slowly began to raise herself out of the chair, afraid of arousing the sleeper who still held her hand. As she stood up, the board in the floor under her squeaked. She was afraid to take another step or to try to pull her hand away. She had come to the end of her resources for entertainment, and she was afraid Aunt Elspeth's next awakening might be to a crying, restless mood which she could not control. So she sat down again.

It was very still in the bedroom. A fly buzzed on the outside of the window screen, and away off on another street the "accommodation" was going by. She could hear the bells jingling on the horses. As she sat thus, not even rocking, but just jiggling the chair a trifle, the words she had read began to come back to her after a while like a refrain: "So

He bringeth them into their desired haven. So He bringeth them into their desired haven." She whispered them over and over as she often whispered songs, hearing the music which had no tone except in her thought.

And presently, as the whispered song repeated itself, the words began to bring a wonderful sense of peace and security. She did not realize what it was that was speaking to her through them. It was the faith which had lived so long in these lowly little rooms. It was the faith which had upborne Uncle Darcy year after year, helping him to steer onward in the confidence that the Hand he trusted would fulfil all its promises. She felt the subtle influence that goes out from such lives, without knowing what it was that touched her. She was conscious of it only as she was conscious of the nearness of mignonette when its fragrance stole in from the flower-bed under the window. They were both unseen but the mignonette's fragrance was wonderfully sweet, and the feeling of confidence, breathing through the words of the old psalm was wonderfully strong. Some day she, too, would be brought, and Barby would be brought into "their desired haven."

Georgina was tired. It had been a full day, beginning with that digging in the dunes. Presently she began to nod. Then the rocking chair ceased to sway. When the clock struck again she did not hear it. She was sound asleep with her hand still clasped in Aunt Elspeth's.

CHAPTER XXI

ON THE TRAIL OF THE WILD-CAT WOMAN

MEANWHILE, the pursuing party had made the trip to Brewster and were on their way home. At the various small towns where they stopped to ask questions, they found that the patent-medicine vendors had invariably followed one course. They had taken supper at the hotel, but after each evening's performance had driven into the country a little way to camp for the night in the open. At Orleans an acquaintance of Mr. Milford's in a feed store had much to say about them.

"I don't know whether they camp out of consideration for the wild-cat, or whether it's because they're attached to that rovin', gypsy life. They're good spenders, and from the way they sold their liniment here last night, you'd think they could afford to put up at a hotel all the time and take a room for the cat in the bargain. You needn't tell me that beast ever saw the banks of the Brazos. I'll bet they caught it up in the Maine woods some'rs. But they seem such honest, straightforward sort of folks, somehow you have to believe 'em. They're a friendly pair, too, specially the old lady. Seems funny to

hear you speak of her as the wild-cat woman. That name is sure a misfit for her."

Mr. Milford thought so himself, when a little later he came across her, a mile out of Brewster. She was sitting in the wooden rocking chair in one end of the wagon, placidly darning a pair of socks, while she waited for her husband to bring the horses from some place up in the woods where he had taken them for water. They had been staked by the roadside all night to graze. The wild-cat was blinking drowsily in its cage, having just been fed.

Some charred sticks and a little pile of ashes by the roadside, showed where she had cooked dinner over a camp-fire, but the embers were carefully extinguished and the frying pan and dishes were stowed out of sight in some mysterious compartment under the wagon bed, as compactly as if they had been parts of a Chinese puzzle. Long experience on the road had taught her how to pack with ease and dexterity.

She looked up with interest as the automobile drew out of the road, and stopped alongside the wagon. She was used to purchasers following them out of town for the liniment after a successful show like last night's performance.

Despite the feedman's description of her, Mr. Milford had expected to see some sort of an adventuress such as one naturally associates with such a business, and when he saw the placid old lady with

the smooth, gray hair, and met the gaze of the motherly eyes peering over her spectacles at him, he scarcely knew how to begin. Uncle Darcy, growing impatient at the time consumed in politely leading up to the object of their coming, fidgetted in his seat. At last he could wait no longer for remarks about weather and wild-cats. Such conversational paths led nowhere. He interrupted abruptly.

"I'm the Towncrier from Provincetown, ma'am. Did you lose anything while you were there?"

"Well, now," she began slowly. "I can't say where I lost it. I didn't think it was in Provincetown though. I made sure it was some place between Harwichport and Orleans, and I had my man post notices in both those places."

"And what was it you lost?" inquired Mr. Milford politely. He had cautioned his old friend on the way down at intervals of every few miles, not to build his hopes up too much on finding that this woman was the owner of the pouch.

"You may have to follow a hundred different clues before you get hold of the right one," he warned him. "We're taking this trip on the mere chance that we'll find the owner, just because two children associated the pouch in their memory with the odor of liniment. It is more than likely they're mistaken and that this is all a wild-goose chase."

But Uncle Darcy *had* built his hopes on it, had set his heart on finding this was the right clue, and his

beaming face said, "I told you so," when she answered:

"It was a little tobacco pouch, and I'm dreadfully put out over losing it, because aside from the valuables and keep-sakes in it there was a letter that's been following me all over the country. It didn't reach me till just before I got to Provincetown. It's from some heathen country with such an outlandish name I couldn't remember it while I was reading it, scarcely, and now I'll never think of it again while the world wags, and there's no way for me to answer it unless I do."

"Oh, don't say that!" exclaimed Uncle Darcy. "You *must* think of it. And I *must* know. How did this come into your hands?"

He held out the little watch-fob charm, the compass set in a nut and she seized it eagerly.

"Well, you did find my pouch, didn't you?" she exclaimed. "I made sure that was what you were aiming to tell me. That's a good-luck charm. It was given to me as much as eight years ago, by a young fellow who was taken sick on our ranch down in Texas. He'd been working around the docks in Galveston, but came on inland because somebody roped him in to believe he could make a fortune in cattle in a few months. He was riding fences for Henry, and he came down with a fever and Henry and me nursed him through."

Always talkative, she poured out her information

now in a stream, drawn on by the compelling eagerness of the old man's gaze.

"He was a nice boy and the most grateful soul you ever saw. But he didn't take to the cattle business, and he soon pushed on. He was all broke up when it came to saying good-bye. You could see that, although he's one of your quiet kind, hiding his real feelings like an Indian. He gave me this good-luck charm when he left, because he didn't have anything else to give, to show he appreciated our nursing him and doing for him, and he said that he'd *make* it bring us good luck or die a-trying and we'd hear from him some of these days."

"And you did?"

The old man's face was twitching with eagerness as he asked the question.

"Yes, about five years ago he sent us a nice little check at Christmas. Said he had a good job with a wealthy Englishman who spent his time going around the world discovering queer plants and writing books about them. He was in South America then. We've heard from him several times since. This last letter followed me around from pillar to post, always just missing me and having to have the address scratched out and written over till you could hardly make head or tail of what was on it.

"He asked me to write to the address he gave me, but whether it was in 'Afric's sunny fountain or In-

dia's coral strand,' I can't tell now. It was some heathenish 'land in error's chain,' as the missionary hymn says. I was so worried over losing the letter on account of the address, for he did seem so bent on hearing from us, and he's a nice boy. I'd hate to loose track of him. So I'm mighty thankful you found the pouch."

She stopped, expecting them to hand it over. Mr. Milford made the necessary explanation. He told of Captain Kidd finding it and bringing it home, of the two children burying it in play and the storm sweeping away every trace of the markers. While he told the story several automobiles passed them and the occupants leaned out to look at the strange group beside the road. It was not every day one could see an old lady seated in a rocking chair in one end of an unattached wagon with a wild-cat in the other. These passing tourists would have thought it stranger still, could they have known how fate had been tangling the life threads of these people who were in such earnest conversation, or how it had wound them together into a queer skein of happenings.

"And the only reason this compass was saved," concluded Mr. Milford, "was because it had the initials 'D. D.' scratched on it, which stands for this little boy's name when he plays pirate—Dare-devil Dick."

The motherly eyes smiled on Richard. "If you

want to know the real name those letters stand for," she said, "it's Dave Daniels. That's the name of the boy who gave it to me."

Richard looked alarmed, and even Mr. Milford turned with a questioning glance towards Uncle Darcy, about to say something, when the old man leaned past him and spoke quickly, almost defiantly, as a child might have done.

"That's all right. I don't care what he told you his name was. He had a good reason for changing it. And I'm going to tell you this much no matter what I promised. *I* scratched those initials on there my own self, over forty years ago. And the boy who gave it to you *is* named Daniel, but it's his first name, same as mine. Dan'l Darcy. And the boy's mine, and I've been hunting him for ten long years, and I've faith to believe that the good Lord isn't going to disappoint me now that I'm this near the end of my hunt. He had a good reason for going away from home the way he did. He'd a good reason for changing his name as he did, but the time has come now when it's all right for him to come back and," shaking his finger solemnly and impressively at the woman, *"I want you to get that word back to him without fail."*

"But this is only circumstantial evidence, Uncle Dan'l," said Mr. Milford, soothingly. "You haven't any real proof that this Dave is your Danny."

"Proof, proof," was the excited answer. "I tell

you, man, I've all the proof I need. All I ask for is the address in that letter. I'll find my boy quick enough."

"But I don't know," was all the woman could answer. "The only way in the world to find it is to dig up that pouch."

"But even if you can't remember the new address tell me one of the old ones," he pleaded. "I'll take a chance on writing there and having it forwarded."

But the woman could not recall the name of a single city. South America, Australia, New Zealand, she remembered he had been in those countries, but that was all. Richard, upon being cross-questioned again, "b'leeved" the stamp was from Siam or China but couldn't be certain which.

"Here comes Henry!" exclaimed the woman in a relieved tone. "Maybe he'll remember."

Henry, a tall, raw-boned man with iron-gray hair under his Texas sombrero, in his shirt sleeves and with his after-dinner pipe still in his mouth, came leisurely out of the woods, leading the horses. They were already harnessed, ready to be hitched to the wagon. He backed them up to the tongue and snapped the chains in place before he paused to give the strangers more than a passing nod of greeting. Then he came around to the side of the wagon nearest the machine, and putting one foot up on a spoke

of his front wheel, leaned over in a listening attitude, while the whole story was repeated for his benefit.

"So you're his father," he said musingly, looking at Uncle Darcy with shrewd eyes that were used to appraising strangers.

"Who ever would a thought of coming across Dave Daniels' tracks up here on old Cape Cod? You look like him though. I bet at his age you were as much alike as two peas in a pod. I never did know where he hailed from. He was a close-mouthed chap. But I somehow got the idea he must have been brought up near salt water. He talked so much sailor lingo."

"Put on your thinking-cap, Henry," demanded his wife. "The gentlemen wants to know where that last letter was written from, what the postmark was, or the address inside, or what country the stamp belonged to. And if you don't know that, what are some of the other places he wrote to us from?"

"You're barking up the wrong tree when you ask *me* any such questions," was the only answer he could give. "I didn't pay any attention to anything but the reading matter."

Questions, surmises, suggestions, everything that could be brought up as aids to memory were of no avail. Henry's memory was a blank in that one important particular. Finally, Mr. Milford took two five-dollar gold pieces out of his pocket and a handful

of small change which he dropped into the woman's lap despite her protests.

"We'll square up the damage the children did as far as possible," he said with a laugh. "But we can't get the letter back until the wind is ready to turn the dunes topsy-turvy again. That may be in years and it may be never. Let me have your address and if ever it is found it shall be sent directly back to you, and the children can inherit the money if I'm not here to claim it."

The man made a wry face at mention of his address. "We sort of belong to what they call the floating population now. Home with us means any old place where Mother happens to set her rocking chair. We've turned the ranch over to my daughter and her husband while we see something of the world, and as long as things go as smoothly as they do, we're in no great shakes of a hurry to get back."

"But the ranch address will always find us, Henry," she insisted. "Write it down for the gentlemen. Ain't this been a strange happening?" she commented, as she received Mr. Milford's card in return with the Towncrier's name penciled on the back. She looked searchingly at Richard.

"I remember you, now," she said. "There was such a pretty little girl with you—climbed up on the wagon to touch Tim's tail through the bars. She had long curls and a smile that made me want to hug her. She bought a bottle of liniment, I re-

member, and I've thought of her a dozen times since then, thought how a little face like that brightens up all the world around it."

"That was Georgina Huntingdon," volunteered Richard.

"Well, now, that's a pretty name. Write it down on the other side of this piece of paper, sonny, and yours, too. Then when I go about the country I'll know what to call you when I think about you. This is just like a story. If there was somebody who knew how to write it up 'twould make a good piece for the papers, wouldn't it?"

They were ready to start back now, since there was no more information to be had, but on one pretext or another Uncle Darcy delayed. He was so pitifully eager for more news of Danny. The smallest crumb about the way he looked, what he did and said was seized upon hungrily, although it was news eight years old. And he begged to hear once more just what it was Danny had said about the Englishman, and the work they were doing together. He could have sat there the rest of the day listening to her repeat the same things over and over if he had had his wish. Then she asked a question.

"Who is Belle? I mind when he was out of his head so long with the fever he kept saying, *'Belle* mustn't suffer. No matter what happens *Belle* must be spared.' I remembered because that's my name, and hearing it called out in the dead of night the

way a man crazy with fever would call it, naturally makes you recollect it."

"That was just a friend of his," answered Uncle Darcy, "the girl who was going to marry his chum."

"Oh," was the answer in a tone which seemed to convey a shade of disappointment. "I thought maybe——"

She did not finish the sentence, for the engine had begun to shake noisily, and it seemed to distract her thoughts. And now there being really nothing more to give them an excuse for lingering they said good-bye to their wayside acquaintances, feeling that they were parting from two old friends, so cordial were the good wishes which accompanied the leave-taking.

CHAPTER XXII

THE RAINBOW GAME

WITH her arm stiff and cramped from being held so long in one position, Georgina waked suddenly and looked around her in bewilderment. Uncle Darcy was in the room, saying something about her riding home in the machine. He didn't want to hurry her off, but Mr. Milford was waiting at the gate, and it would save her a long walk home——

While he talked he was leaning over Aunt Elspeth, patting her cheek, and she was clinging to his hand and smiling up at him as if he had just been restored to her after a long, long absence, instead of a separation of only a few hours. And he looked so glad about something, as if the nicest thing in the world had happened, that Georgina rubbed her eyes and stared at him, wondering what it could have been.

Evidently, it was the honk of the horn which had aroused Georgina, and when it sounded again she sprang up, still confused by the suddenness of her awakening, with only one thing clear in her mind, the necessity for haste. She snatched her prism from the window and caught up her hat as she ran through the next room, but not until she was half-way home

did she remember that she had said nothing about the eggs and had asked no questions about the trip to Brewster. She had not even said good-bye.

Mr. Milford nodded pleasantly when she went out to the car, saying, "Hop in, kiddie," but he did not turn around after they started and she did not feel well enough acquainted with him to shout out questions behind his back. Besides, after they had gone a couple of blocks he began explaining something to Richard, who was sitting up in front of him, about the workings of the car, and kept on explaining all the rest of the way home. She couldn't interrupt.

Not until she climbed out in front of her own gate with a shy "Thank you, Mr. Milford, for bringing me home," did she find courage and opportunity to ask the question she longed to know.

"Did you find the woman? *Was* it her pouch?"

Mr. Milford was leaning forward in his seat to examine something that had to do with the shifting of the gears, and he answered while he investigated, without looking up.

"Yes, but she couldn't remember where the letter was from, so we're not much wiser than we were before, except that we know for a certainty that Dan was alive and well less than two months ago. At least Uncle Dan'l believes it is Dan. The woman calls him Dave, but Uncle Dan'l vows they're one and the same."

Having adjusted the difficulty, Mr. Milford, with a good-bye nod to Georgina, started on down the street again. Georgina stood looking after the rapidly disappearing car.

"Well, no wonder Uncle Darcy looked so happy," she thought, recalling his radiant face. "It was knowing that Danny is alive and well that made it shine so. I wish I'd been along. Wish I could have heard every thing each one of them said. I could have remembered every single word to tell Richard, but he won't remember even half to tell me."

It was in the pursuit of all the information which could be pumped out of Richard that Georgina sought the Green Stairs soon after breakfast next morning. Incidentally, she was on her way to a nearby grocery and had been told to hurry. She ran all the way down in order to gain a few extra moments in which to loiter. As usual at this time of morning, Richard was romping over the terraces with Captain Kidd.

"Hi, Georgina," he called, as he spied her coming. "I've got a new game. A new way to play tag. Look."

Plunging down the steps he held out for her inspection a crystal paperweight which he had picked up from the library table. Its round surface had been cut into many facets, as a diamond is cut to make it flash the light, and the spots of color it threw as he turned it in the sun were rainbow-hued.

"See," he explained. "Instead of tagging Captain Kidd with my hand I touch him with a rainbow, and it's lots harder to do because you can't always make it light where you want it to go, or where you think it is going to fall. I've only tagged him twice so far in all the time I've been trying, because he bobs around so fast. Come on, I'll get you before you tag me," he added, seeing that her prism hung from the ribbon on her neck.

She did not wear it every day, but she had felt an especial need for its comforting this morning, and had put it on as she slowly dressed. The difficulty of restoring the eggs loomed up in front of her as a real trouble, and she needed this to remind her to keep on hoping that some way would soon turn up to end it.

It was a fascinating game. Such tags are elusive, uncertain things. The pursuer can never be certain of touching the pursued. Georgina entered into it, alert and glowing, darting this way and that to escape being touched by the spots of vivid color. Her prism threw it in bars, Richard's in tiny squares and triangles.

"Let's make them fight!" Richard exclaimed in the midst of it, and for a few moments the color spots flashed across each other like flocks of darting birds. Suddenly Georgina stopped, saying:

"Oh, I forgot. I'm on my way to the grocery, and I must hurry back. But I wanted to ask you two

things. One was, tell me all about what the woman said yesterday, and the other was, think of some way for me to earn twenty cents. There isn't time to hear about the first one now, but think right quick and answer the second question."

She started down the street, skipping backwards slowly, and Richard walked after her.

"Aw, I don't know," he answered in a vague way. "At home when we wanted to make money we always gave a show and charged a penny to get in, or we kept a lemonade stand; but we don't know enough kids here to make that pay."

Then he looked out over the water and made a suggestion at random. A boy going along the beach towards one of the summer cottages with a pail in his hand, made him think of it.

"Pick blueberries and sell them."

"I thought of that," answered Georgina, still progressing towards the grocery backward. "And it would be a good time now to slip away while Tippy's busy with the Bazaar. This is the third day. But they've done so well they're going to keep on with it another day, and they've thought up a lot of new things to-morrow to draw a crowd. One of them is a kind of talking tableau. I'm to be in it, so it wouldn't do for me to go and get my hands all stained with berries when I'm to be dressed up as a part of the show for the whole town to come and take a look at me."

Richard had no more suggestions to offer, so with one more flash of the prism and a cry of "last tag," Georgina turned and started on a run to the grocery. Richard and the paperweight followed in hot pursuit.

Up at one of the front windows of the bungalow, two interested spectators had been watching the game below. One was Richard's father, the other was a new guest of Mr. Milford's who had arrived only the night before. He was the Mr. Locke who was to take Richard and his father and Cousin James away on his yacht next morning. He was also a famous illustrator of juvenile books, and he sometimes wrote the rhymes and fairy tales himself which he illustrated. Everybody in this town of artists who knew anything at all of the world of books and pictures outside, knew of Milford Norris Locke. Now as he watched the graceful passes of the two children darting back and forth on the board-walk below, he asked:

"Who's the little girl, Moreland? She's the child of my dreams—the very one I've been hunting for weeks. She has not only the sparkle and spirit that I want to put into those pictures I was telling you about, but the grace and the curls and the mischievous eyes as well. Reckon I could get her to pose for me?"

That is how it came about that Georgina found Richard's father waiting for her at the foot of the

Green Stairs when she came running back from the grocery. When she went home a few minutes later, she carried with her something more than the cake of sweet chocolate that Tippy had sent her for in such a hurry. It was the flattering knowledge that a famous illustrator had asked to make a sketch of her which would be published in a book if it turned out to be a good one.

With a sailing party and a studio reception and several other engagements to fill up his one day in Provincetown, Mr. Locke could give only a part of the morning to the sketches, and wanted to begin as soon as possible. So a few minutes after Georgina went dancing in with the news, he followed in Mr. Milford's machine. He arrived so soon after, in fact, that Tippy had to receive him just as she was in her gingham house dress and apron.

After looking all over the place he took Georgina down to the garden and posed her on a stone bench near the sun-dial, at the end of a tall, bright aisle of hollyhocks. There was no time to waste.

"We'll pretend you're sitting on the stone rim of a great fountain in the King's garden," he said. "You're trying to find some trace of the beautiful Princess who has been bewitched and carried away to a castle under the sea, that had 'a ceiling of amber, a pavement of pearl.'"

Georgina looked up, delighted that he had used

a line from a poem she loved. It made her feel as if he were an old friend.

"This is for a fairy tale that has just begun to hatch itself out in my mind, so you see it isn't all quite clear yet. There'll be lily pads in the fountain. Maybe you can hear what they are saying, or maybe the gold-fish will bring you a message, because you are a little mortal who has such a kind heart that you have been given the power to understand the speech of everything which creeps or swims or flies."

Georgina leaned over and looked into the imaginary fountain dubiously, forgetting in her interest of the moment that her companion was the great Milford Norris Locke. She was entering with him into the spirit of his game of "pretend" as if he were Richard.

"No, I'll tell you," she suggested. "Have it a frog instead of a fish that brings the message. He can jump right out of that lily pad on to the edge of the fountain where I am sitting, and then when you look at the picture you can see us talking together. No one could tell what I was doing if they saw me just looking down into the fountain, but they could tell right away if the frog was here and I was shaking my finger at him as if I were saying:

" 'Now tell me the truth, Mr. Frog, or the Ogre of the Oozy Marsh shall eat you ere the day be done.' "

"Don't move. Don't move!" called Mr. Locke, excitedly. "Ah, that's perfect. That's exactly what I want. Hold that pose for a moment or two. Why, Georgina, you've given me exactly what I wanted and a splendid idea besides. It will give the fairy tale an entirely new turn. If you can only hold that position a bit longer, then you may rest."

His pencil flew with magical rapidity and as he sketched he kept on talking in order to hold the look of intense interest which showed in her glowing face.

"I dearly love stories like that," sighed Georgina when he came to the end and told her to lean back and rest a while.

"Barby—I mean my mother—and I act them all the time, and sometimes we make them up ourselves."

"Maybe you'll write them when you grow up," suggested Mr. Locke not losing a moment, but sketching her in the position she had taken of her own accord.

"Maybe I shall," exclaimed Georgina, thrilled by the thought. "My grandfather Shirley said I could write for his paper some day. You know he's an editor, down in Kentucky. I'd like to be the editor of a magazine that children would adore the way I do the *St. Nicholas.*"

Tippy would have said that Georgina was "running on." But Mr. Locke did not think so. Children always opened their hearts to him. He held the

magic key. Georgina found it easier to tell him her inmost feelings than anybody else in the world but Barby.

"That's a beautiful game you and Dicky were playing this morning," he remarked presently, "tagging each other with rainbows. I believe I'll put it into this fairy tale, have the water-nixies do it as they slide over the water-fall."

"But it isn't half as nice as the game we play in earnest," she assured him. "In our Rainbow Club we have a sort of game of tag. We tag a person with a good time, or some kindness to make them happy, and we pretend that makes a little rainbow in the world. Do you think it does?"

"It makes a very real one, I am sure," was the serious answer. "Have you many members?"

"Just Richard and me and the bank president, Mr. Gates, so far, but—but you can belong—if you'd like to."

She hesitated a trifle over the last part of her invitation, having just remembered what a famous man she was talking to. He might think she was taking a liberty even to suggest that he might care to belong.

"I'd like it very much," he assured her gravely, "if you think I can live up to the requirements."

"Oh, you already have," she cried. "Think of all the happy hours you have made for people with your books and pictures—just swarms and bevies

and *flocks* of rainbows! We would have put you on the list of honorary members anyhow. Those are the members who don't know they are members," she explained. "They're just like the prisms themselves. Prisms don't know they are prisms but everybody who looks at them sees the beautiful places they make in the world."

"Georgina," he said solemnly, "that is the very loveliest thing that was ever said to me in all my life. Make me club member number four and I'll play the game to my very best ability. I'll try to do some tagging really worth while."

He had been sketching constantly all the time he talked, and now, impelled by curiosity, Georgina got up from the stone bench and walked over to take a look at his work. He had laid aside the several outline studies he had made of her, and was now exercising his imagination in sketching a ship.

"This is to be the one that brings the Princess home, and in a minute I want you to pose for the Princess, for she is to have curls, long, golden ones, and she is to hold her head as you did a few moments ago when you were talking about looking off to sea."

Georgina brought her hands together in a quick gesture as she said imploringly, "Oh, *do* put Hope at the prow. Every time I pass the Figurehead House and see Hope sitting up on the portico roof I wish I could see how she looked when she was riding the

(Coming across a Sea of Dreams)

waves on the prow of a gallant vessel. That's where she ought to be, I heard a man say. He said Hope squatting on a portico roof may look ridiculous, but Hope breasting the billows is superb."

Mr. Locke was no stranger in the town. He knew the story of the figurehead as the townspeople knew it, now he heard its message as Uncle Darcy knew it. He listened as intently to Georgina as she had listened to him. At the end he lifted his head, peering fixedly through half-closed eyes at nothing.

"You have made me see the most beautiful ship," he said, musingly. "It is a silver shallop coming across a sea of Dreams, its silken sails set wide, and at the prow is an angel. 'White-handed Hope, thou hovering angel girt with golden wings,' " he quoted. "Yes, I'll make it with golden wings sweeping back over the sides this way. See?"

His pencil flew over the paper again, showing her in a few swift strokes an outline of the vision she had given him.

And now Tippy would have said not only that Georgina was "running on," but that she was "wound up," for with such a sympathetic and appreciative listener, she told him the many things she would have taken to Barby had she been at home. Especially, she talked about her difficulties in living up to the aim of the club. In stories there are always poor people whom one can benefit; patient sufferers at hospitals, pallid children of the slums. But in the

range of Georgina's life there seemed to be so few opportunities and those few did not always turn out the way they should.

For instance, there was the time she tried to cheer Tippy up with her "line to live by," and her efforts were neither appreciated nor understood. And there was the time only yesterday when she stayed with Aunt Elspeth, and got into trouble with the eggs, and now had a debt on her conscience equal to eight eggs or twenty cents.

It showed how well Mr. Locke understood children when he did not laugh over the recital of that last calamity, although it sounded unspeakably funny to him as Georgina told it. In such congenial company the time flew so fast that Georgina was amazed when Mr. Milford drove up to take his distinguished guest away. Mr. Locke took with him what he had hoped to get, a number of sketches to fill in at his leisure.

"They're exactly what I wanted," he assured her gratefully as he shook hands at parting. "And that suggestion of yours for the ship will make the most fetching illustration of all. I'll send you a copy in oils when I get time for it, and I'll always think of you, my little friend, as *Georgina of the Rainbows*."

With a courtly bow he was gone, and Georgina went into the house to look for the little blank book in which she had started to keep her two lists of Club members, honorary and real. The name of

Milford Norris Locke she wrote in both lists. If there had been a third list, she would have written him down in that as the very nicest gentleman she had ever met. Then she began a letter to Barby, telling all about her wonderful morning. But it seemed to her she had barely begun, when Mr. Milford's chauffeur came driving back with something for her in a paper bag. When she peeped inside she was so astonished she nearly dropped it.

"Eggs!" she exclaimed. Then in unconscious imitation of Mrs. Saggs, she added, "Can you beat *that!*"

One by one she took them out and counted them. There were exactly eight. Then she read the card which had dropped down to the bottom of the bag.

"Mr. Milford Norris Locke."

Above the name was a tiny rainbow done in water colors, and below was scribbled the words, "Last tag."

It was a pity that the new member could not have seen her face at that instant, its expression was so eloquent of surprise, of pleasure and of relief that her trouble had thus been wiped out of existence.

CHAPTER XXIII

LIGHT DAWNS FOR UNCLE DARCY

FOR some time the faint jangle of a bell had been sounding at intervals far down the street. Ordinarily it would have caught Georgina's attention long before this, but absorbed in the letter to which she had returned after putting the eggs down cellar, she did not hear the ringing until it was near enough for the Towncrier's message to be audible also. He was announcing the extra day of the Bazaar, and calling attention to the many new attractions it would have to offer on the morrow.

Instantly, Georgina dropped her pencil and flew out to meet him. Here was an opportunity to find out all about the Brewster trip. As he came towards her she saw the same look in his weather-beaten old face which she had wondered at the day before, when he was bending over Aunt Elspeth, patting her on the cheek. It was like the shining of a newly-lighted candle.

She was not the only one who had noticed it. All the way up the street glances had followed him. People turned for a second look, wondering what good fortune had befallen the old fellow. They had come

to expect a cheery greeting from him. He always left a kindly glow behind him whenever he passed. But to-day the cheeriness was so intensified that he seemed to be brimming over with good will to everybody.

"Why, Uncle Darcy!" cried Georgina. "You look so happy!"

"Well, is it any wonder, lass, with such news from Danny? Him alive and well and sure to come back to me some of these days! I could hardly keep from shouting it out to everybody as I came along the street. I'm afraid it'll just naturally tell itself some day, in spite of my promise to Belle. I'm glad I can let off steam up here, you knowing the secret, too, for this old heart of mine is just about to burst with all the gladness that's inside of me."

Here was someone as anxious to tell as she was to hear; someone who could recall every word of the interview with the wild-cat woman. Georgina swung on to his arm which held the bell, and began to ask questions, and nothing loath, he let her lead him into the yard and to the rustic seat running around the trunk of the big willow tree. He was ready to rest, now that his route was traveled and his dollar earned.

Belle, back in the kitchen, preparing a light dinner for herself and Georgina, Tippy being away for the day, did not see him come in. She had not seen him since the day the old rifle gave up its secret, and

she tried to put him out of her mind as much as possible, for she was miserable every time she thought of him. She would have been still more miserable could she have heard all that he was saying to Georgina.

"Jimmy Milford thought that the liniment folks calling the boy 'Dave,' proved that he wasn't the same as my Danny. But just one thing would have settled all doubts for me if I'd a had any. That was what he kept a calling in his fever when he was out of his head: 'Belle mustn't suffer. Belle must be spared, no matter what happens!'

"And that's the one thing that reconciles me to keeping still a while longer. It was his wish to spare her, and if he could sacrifice so much to do it, I can't make his sacrifice seem in vain. I lay awake last night till nearly daylight, thinking how I'd like to take this old bell of mine, and go from one end of the town to the other, ringing it till it cracked, crying out, *'Danny is innocent,'* to the whole world. But the time hasn't come yet. I'll have to be patient a while longer and bear up the best I can."

Georgina, gazing fixedly ahead of her at nothing in particular, pondered seriously for a long, silent moment.

"If you did that," she said finally, "cried the good news through the town till everybody knew—then when people found out that it was Emmett Potter who was the thief and that he was too much of a

coward to own up and take the blame—would they let the monument go on standing there, that they'd put up to show he was brave? It would serve him right if they took it down, wouldn't it!" she exclaimed with a savage little scowl drawing her brows together.

"No, no, child!" he said gently. "Give the lad his due. He *was* brave that one time. He saved all those lives as it is chiseled on his headstone. It is better he should be remembered for the best act in his life than for the worst one. A man's measure should be taken when he's stretched up to his full height, just as far as he can lift up his head; not when he's stooped to the lowest. It's only fair to judge either the living or the dead that way."

For some time after that nothing more was said. The harbor was full of boats this morning. It was a sight worth watching. One naturally drifted into day-dreams, following the sweep of the sails moving silently toward the far horizon. Georgina was busy picturing a home-coming scene that made the prodigal son's welcome seem mild in comparison, when Uncle Darcy startled her by exclaiming:

"Oh, it *pays* to bear up and steer right onward! S'pose I hadn't done that. S'pose I *hadn't* kept Hope at the prow. I believe I'd have been in my grave by this time with all the grief and worry. But now——"

He stopped and shook his head, unable to find

words to express the emotion which was making his voice tremble and his face glow with that wonderful inner shining. Georgina finished the sentence for him, looking out on the sail-filled harbor and thinking of the day he had taken her out in his boat to tell her of his son.

"But now you'll be all ready and waiting when your ship comes home from sea with its precious cargo." They were his own words she was repeating.

"Danny'll weather the storms at last and come into port with all flags flying."

The picture her words suggested was too much for the old father. He put his hat up in front of his face, and his shoulders shook with silent sobs. Georgina laid a sympathetic little hand on the rough sleeve next her. Suddenly the sails in the harbor seemed to run together all blurry and queer. She drew her hand across her eyes and looked again at the heaving shoulders. A happiness so deep that it found its expression that way, filled her with awe. It must be the kind of happiness that people felt when they reached "the shining shore, the other side of Jordan," and their loved ones came down to welcome them "into their desired haven."

That last phrase came to her lips like a bit of remembered music and unconsciously she repeated it aloud. Uncle Darcy heard it, and looked up. His cheeks were wet when he put down his hat, but it

was the happiest face she had ever seen, and there was no shake in his voice now when he said solemnly:

"And nobody but the good Lord who's helped his poor sailors through shipwreck and storm, knows how mightily they've desired that haven, or what it means to them to be brought into it."

A delivery wagon from one of the fruit stores stopped in front of the gate, and the driver came in, carrying a basket. Uncle Darcy spoke to him as he passed the willow tree.

"Well, Joe, this looks like a chance for me to get a lift most of the way home."

"Sure," was the cordial reply. "Climb in. I'll be right back."

Georgina thought of something as he rose to go.

"Oh, wait just a minute, Uncle Darcy, I want to get something of yours that's down cellar."

When she came back there was no time or opportunity for an explanation. He and the driver were both in the wagon. She reached up and put the bag on the seat beside him.

"I—I did something to some of your eggs, yesterday," she stammered, "and these are to take the place of the ones I broke."

Uncle Darcy peered into the bag with a puzzled expression. He had not missed any eggs from the crock of bran. He didn't know what she was talking about. But before he could ask any questions the driver slapped the horse with the reins, and they were

rattling off down street. Georgina stood looking after them a moment, then turned her head to listen. Somebody was calling her. It was Belle. who had come to the front door to say that dinner was ready.

Whenever Mrs. Triplett was at home, Belle made extra efforts to talk and appear interested in what was going on around her. She was afraid her keen-eyed Aunt Maria would see that she was unhappy. But alone with Georgina who shared her secret, she relapsed into a silence so deep it could be felt, responding only with a wan smile when the child's lively chatter seemed to force an answer of some kind. But to-day when Georgina came to the table she was strangely silent herself, so mute that Belle noticed it, and found that she was being furtively watched by the big brown eyes opposite her. Every time Belle looked up she caught Georgina's gaze fastened on her, and each time it was immediately transferred to her plate.

"What's the matter, Georgina?" she asked finally. "Why do you keep staring at me?"

Georgina flushed guiltily. "Nothing," was the embarrassed answer. "I was just wondering whether to tell you or not. I thought maybe you'd like to know, and maybe you ought to know, but I wasn't sure whether you'd want me to talk to you about it or not."

Belle put down her tea-cup. It was her turn to stare.

"For goodness' sake! What *are* you beating around the bush about?"

"About the news from Danny," answered Georgina. "About the letter he wrote to the wild-cat woman and that got buried in the dunes too deep ever to be dug up again."

As this was the first Belle had heard of either the letter or the woman, her expression of astonishment was all that Georgina could desire. Her news had made a sensation. Belle showed plainly that she was startled, and as eager to hear as Georgina was to tell. So she began at the beginning, from the time of the opening of the pouch on the Green Stairs, to the last word of the wild-cat woman's conversation which Uncle Darcy had repeated to her only a few moments before under the willow.

Instinctively, she gave the recital a dramatic touch which made Belle feel almost like an eye witness as she listened. And it was with Uncle Darcy's own gestures and manner that she repeated his final statement.

"Jimmy Milford thought the liniment folks calling the boy Dave proved he wasn't the same as my Danny. But just one thing would have settled all doubts for me if I'd had any. That was what he kept a calling in his fever when he was out of his

head: '*Belle* mustn't suffer. *Belle* must be spared no matter what happens.' "

At the bringing of her own name into the story Belle gave a perceptible start and a tinge of red crept into her pale cheeks.

"Did he say that, Georgina?" she demanded, leaning forward and looking at her intently. "Are you sure those are his exact words?"

"His very-own-exactly-the-same words," declared Georgina solemnly. "I cross my heart and body they're just as Uncle Darcy told them to me."

Rising from the table, Belle walked over to the window and stood with her back to Georgina, looking out into the garden.

"Well, and what next?" she demanded in a queer, breathless sort of way.

"And then Uncle Darcy said that his saying that was the one thing that made him feel willing to keep still a while longer about—you know—what was in the rifle. 'Cause if Danny cared enough about sparing you to give up home and his good name and everything else in life he couldn't spoil it all by telling now. But Uncle Darcy said he lay awake nearly all last night thinking how he'd love to take that old bell of his and go ringing it through the town till it cracked, calling out to the world, 'My boy is innocent.'

"And when I said something about it's all coming out all right some day, and that Danny would

weather the storms and come into port with all flags flying——" Here Georgina lowered her voice and went on slowly as if she hesitated to speak of what happened next—"he just put his old hat over his face and cried. And I felt so sorry——"

Georgina's voice choked. There were tears in her eyes as she spoke of the scene.

"Don't!" groaned Belle, her back still turned.

The note of distress in Belle's voice stilled Georgina's lively tongue a few seconds, but there was one more thing in her mind to be said, and with the persistence of a mosquito she returned to the subject to give that final stab, quite unconscious of how deeply it would sting. She was only wondering aloud, something which she had often wondered to herself.

"I should think that when anybody had suffered as long as Danny has to spare you, it would make you want to spare him. Doesn't it? I should think that you'd want to do something to sort of make up to him for it all. Don't you?"

"Oh, *don't!*" exclaimed Belle again, sharply this time. Then to Georgina's utter amazement she buried her face in her apron, stood sobbing by the window a moment, and ran out of the room. She did not come downstairs again until nearly supper time.

Georgina sat at the table, not knowing what to do next. She felt that she had muddled things dreadfully. Instead of making Belle feel better as she hoped to do, she realized she had hurt her in some

unintentional way. Presently, she slowly drew herself up from her chair and began to clear the table, piling the few dishes they had used, under the dishpan in the sink. The house stood open to the summer breeze. It seemed so desolate and deserted with Belle upstairs, drawn in alone with her troubles and Tippy away, that she couldn't bear to stay in the silent rooms. She wandered out into the yard and climbed up into the willow to look across the water.

Somewhere out there on those shining waves, Richard was sailing along, in the party given for Mr. Locke, and to-morrow he would be going away on the yacht. If he were at home she wouldn't be up in the willow wondering what to do next. Well, as long as she couldn't have a good time herself she'd think of someone else she could make happy. For several minutes she sent her thoughts wandering over the list of all the people she knew, but it seemed as if her friends were capable of making their own good times, all except poor Belle. Probably *she* never would be happy again, no matter what anybody did to try to brighten her life. It was so discouraging when one was trying to play the game of "Rainbow Tag," for there to be no one to tag. She wished she knew some needy person, some unfortunate soul who would be glad of her efforts to make them happy.

Once she thought of slipping off down street to the library. Miss Tupman always let her go in

where the shelves were and choose her own book. Miss Tupman was always so interesting, too, more than any of the books when she had time to talk. But that grim old word Duty rose up in front of her, telling her that she ought not to run away and leave the house all open with Belle locked in her room upstairs. Somebody ought to be within hearing if the telephone rang or anyone came. She went into the house for a book which she had read many times but which never failed to interest her, and curled up in a big rocking chair on the front porch.

Late in the afternoon she smelled burning pine chips and smoke from the kitchen chimney which told that a fire was being started in the stove. After a while she went around the house to the kitchen door and peeped in, apprehensively. Belle was piling the dinner dishes into the pan, preparatory to washing them while supper was cooking. Her eyes were red and she did not look up when Georgina came in, but there was an air of silent determination about her as forcible as her Aunt Maria's. Picking up the tea-kettle, she filled the dishpan and carried the kettle back to the stove, setting it down hard before she spoke. Then she said:

"Nobody'll ever know what I've been through with, fighting this thing out with myself. I can't go all the way yet. I *can't* say the word that'll let the blow fall on poor old Father Potter. But I don't seem to care about my part of it any more. I see

things differently from what I did that first day—*you* know. Even Emmett don't seem the same any more."

For several minutes there was a rattling of dishes, but no further speech from Belle. Georgina, not knowing what to say or do, stood poised uncertainly on the door-sill. Then Belle spoke again.

"I'm willing it should be told if only it could be kept from getting back to Father Potter, for the way Dan's done *does* make me want to set him square with the world. I would like to make up to him in some way for all he's suffered on my account. I can't get over it that it was *him* that had all the bravery and the nobleness that I was fairly worshiping in Emmett all these years. Seems like the whole world has turned upside down."

Georgina waited a long time, but Belle seemed to have said all that she intended to say, so presently she walked over and stood beside the sink.

"Belle," she said slowly, "does what you said mean that you're really willing I should tell Barby? Right away?"

Belle waited an instant before replying, then taking a deep breath as if about to make a desperate plunge into a chasm on whose brink she had long been poised, said:

"Yes. Uncle Dan'l would rather have her know than anybody else. He sets such store by her good opinion. But oh, *do* make it plain it mustn't be

talked about outside, so's it'll get back to Father Potter."

The next instant Georgina's arms were around her in a silent but joyful squeeze, and she ran upstairs to write to Barby before the sun should go down or Tippy get back from the Bazaar.

CHAPTER XXIV

A CONTRAST IN FATHERS

GEORGINA was having a beautiful day. It was the first time she had ever taken part in a Bazaar, and so important was the role assigned her that she was in a booth all by herself. Moreover, the little mahogany chair in which she sat was on a high platform inside the booth, so that all might behold her. Dressed in a quaint old costume borrowed from the chests in the Figurehead House, she represented "A Little Girl of Long Ago."

On a table beside her stood other borrowed treasures from the Figurehead House—a doll bedstead made by an old sea captain on one of his voyages. Each of its high posts was tipped with a white point, carved from the bone of a whale. Wonderful little patchwork quilts, a feather bed and tiny pillows made especially for the bed, were objects of interest to everyone who crowded around the booth. So were the toys and dishes brought home from other long cruises by the same old sea captain, who evidently was an indulgent father and thought often of the little daughter left behind in the home port. A row of dolls dressed in fashions half a century old were also on exhibition.

With unfailing politeness Georgina explained to the curious summer people who thronged around her, that they all belonged in the house where the figurehead of Hope sat on the portico roof, and were not for sale at any price.

Until to-day Georgina had been unconscious that she possessed any unusual personal charms, except her curls. Her attention had been called to them from the time she was old enough to understand remarks people made about them as she passed along the street. Their beauty would have been a great pleasure to her if Tippy had not impressed upon her the fact that looking in the mirror makes one vain, and it's wicked to be vain. One way in which Tippy guarded her against the sin of vanity was to mention some of her bad points, such as her mouth being a trifle too large, or her nose not quite so shapely as her mother's, each time anyone unwisely called attention to her "glorious hair."

Another way was to repeat a poem from a book called "Songs for the Little Ones at Home," the same book which had furnished the "Landing of the Pilgrims" and "Try, Try Again." It began:

"What! Looking in the glass again?
Why's my silly child so vain?"

The disgust, the surprise, the scorn of Tippy's voice when she repeated that was enough to make

one hurry past a mirror in shame-faced embarrassment.

"Beauty soon will fade away.
Your rosy cheeks must soon decay.
There's nothing lasting you will find,
But the treasures of the mind."

Rosy cheeks might not be lasting, but it was certainly pleasant to Georgina to hear them complimented so continually by passers-by. Sometimes the remarks were addressed directly to her.

"My *dear*," said one enthusiastic admirer, "if I could only buy *you* and put you in a gold frame, I'd have a prettier picture than any artist in town can paint." Then she turned to a companion to add:

"Isn't she a love in that little poke bonnet with the row of rose-buds inside the rim? I never saw such exquisite coloring or such gorgeous eyes."

Georgina blushed and looked confused as she smoothed the long lace mitts over her arms. But by the time the day was over she had heard the sentiment repeated so many times that she began to expect it and to feel vaguely disappointed if it were not forthcoming from each new group which approached her.

Another thing gave her a new sense of pleasure and enriched her day. On the table beside her, under

a glass case, to protect it from careless handling, was a little blank book which contained the records of the first sewing circle in Provincetown. The book lay open, displaying a page of the minutes, and a column of names of members, written in an exquisitely fine and beautiful hand. The name of Georgina's great-great grandmother was in that column. It gave her a feeling of being well born and distinguished to be able to point it out.

The little book seemed to reinforce and emphasize the claims of the monument and the silver porringer. She felt it was so nice to be beautiful and *to belong;* to have belonged from the beginning both to a first family and a first sewing circle.

Still another thing added to her contentment whenever the recollection of it came to her. There was no longer any secret looming up between her and Barby like a dreadful wall. The letter telling all about the wonderful and exciting things which had happened in her absence was already on its way to Kentucky. It was not a letter to be proud of. It was scrawled as fast as she could write it with a pencil, and she knew perfectly well that a dozen or more words were misspelled, but she couldn't take time to correct them, or to think of easy words to put in their places. But Barby wouldn't care. She would be so happy for Uncle Darcy's sake and so interested in knowing that her own little daughter

had had an important part in finding the good news that she wouldn't notice the spelling or the scraggly writing.

As the day wore on, Georgina, growing more and more satisfied with herself and her lot, felt that there was no one in the whole world with whom she would change places. Towards the last of the afternoon a group of people came in whom Georgina recognized as a family from the Gray Inn. They had been at the Inn several days, and she had noticed them each time she passed them, because the children seemed on such surprisingly intimate terms with their father. That he was a naval officer she knew from the way he dressed, and that he was on a long furlough she knew from some remark which she overheard.

He had a grave, stern face, and when he came into the room he gave a searching glance from left to right as if to take notice of every object in it. His manner made Georgina think of "Casabianca," another poem of Tippy's teaching:

"He stood
As born to rule the storm.
A creature of heroic blood,
A brave though.....form."

"Childlike" was the word she left out because it did not fit in this case. "A brave and manlike form"

would be better. She repeated the verse to herself with this alteration.

When he spoke to his little daughter or she spoke to him his expression changed so wonderfully that Georgina watched him with deep interest. The oldest boy was with them. He was about fourteen and as tall as his mother. He was walking beside her but every few steps he turned to say something to the others, and they seemed to be enjoying some joke together. Somebody who knew them came up as they reached the booth of "The Little Girl of Long Ago," and introduced them to Georgina, so she found out their names. It was Burrell. He was a Captain, and the children were Peggy and Bailey.

As Georgina looked down at Peggy from the little platform where she sat in the old mahogany chair, she thought with a throb of satisfaction that she was glad she didn't have to change places with that homely little thing. Evidently, Peggy was just up from a severe illness. Her hair had been cut so short one could scarcely tell the color of it. She was so thin and white that her eyes looked too large for her face and her neck too slender for her head, and the freckles which would scarcely have shown had she been her usual rosy self, stood out like big brown spotches on her pallid little face. She limped a trifle too, as she walked.

With a satisfied consciousness of her own rose-

leaf complexion, Georgina was almost patronizing as she bent over the table to say graciously once more after countless number of times, "no, that is not for sale."

The next instant Peggy was swinging on her father's arm exclaiming, "Oh, Dad-o'-my-heart! See that cunning doll bathing suit. Please get it for me." Almost in the same breath Bailey, jogging the Captain's elbow on the other side, exclaimed, "Look, Partner, *that's* a relic worth having."

Georgina listened, fascinated. To think of calling one's father "Dad-o'-my-heart" or "Partner!" And they looked up at him as if they adored him, even that big boy, nearly grown. And a sort of laugh come into the Captain's eyes each time they spoke to him, as if he thought everything they said and did was perfect.

A wave of loneliness swept over Georgina as she listened. There was an empty spot in her heart that ached with longing—not for Barby, but for the father whom she had never known in this sweet intimate way. She knew now how it felt to be an orphan. What satisfaction was there in having beautiful curls if no big, kind hand ever passed over them in a fatherly caress such as was passing over Peggy Burrell's closely-clipped head? What pleasure was there in having people praise you if they said behind your back:

"Oh, that's Justin Huntingdon's daughter. Don't

you think a man would want to come home once or twice in a lifetime to such a lovely child as that?"

Georgina had heard that very remark earlier in the day, also the answer given with a significant shrug of the shoulders:

"Oh, he has other fish to fry."

The remarks had not annoyed her especially at the time, but they rankled now as she recalled them. They hurt until they took all the pleasure and satisfaction out of her beautiful day, just as the sun, going under a cloud, leaves the world bereft of all its shine and sparkle. She looked around, wishing it were time to go home.

Presently, Captain Burrell, having made the rounds of the room, came back to Georgina. He smiled at her so warmly that she wondered that she could have thought his face was stern.

"They tell me that you are Doctor Huntingdon's little girl," he said with a smile that went straight to her heart. "So I've come back to ask you all about him. Where is he now and how is he? You see I have an especial interest in your distinguished father. He pulled me through a fever in the Philippines that all but ended me. I have reason to remember him for his many, many kindnesses to me at that time."

The flush that rose to Georgina's face might naturally have been taken for one of pride or pleasure, but it was only miserable embarrassment at not be-

ing able to answer the Captain's questions. She could not bear to confess that she knew nothing of her father's whereabouts except the vague fact that he was somewhere in the interior of China, and that there had been no letter from him for months and that she had not seen him for nearly four years.

"He—he was well the last time we heard from him," she managed to stammer. "But I haven't heard anything lately. You know my mother isn't home now. She went to Kentucky because my grandfather Shirley was hurt in an accident."

"Oh, I'm sorry to hear that," was the answer in a cordial, sympathetic voice. "I hoped to have the pleasure of meeting her and I wanted Mrs. Burrell to know her, too. But I hope you'll come over to the Inn and play with Peggy sometimes. We'll be here another week."

Georgina thanked him in her prettiest manner, but she was relieved when he passed on, and she was freed from the fear of any more embarrassing questions about her father. Yet her hand still tingled with the friendliness of his good-bye clasp, and she wished that she could know him better. As she watched him pass out of the door with Peggy holding his hand and swinging it as they walked, she thought hungrily:

"How good it must seem to have a father like *that.*"

Mrs. Triplett came up to her soon after. It was

time to close the Bazaar. The last probable customer had gone, and the ladies in charge of the booths were beginning to dismantle them. Someone's chauffeur was waiting to take Georgina's costume back to the Figurehead House.

She followed Mrs. Triplett obediently into an improvised dressing-room in the corner, behind a tall screen, and in a very few minutes was about to emerge clad in her own clothes, when Mrs. Triplett exclaimed:

"For pity sakes! Those gold beads!"

Georgina's hand went up to the string of gold beads still around her neck. They also were borrowed from Mrs. Tupman of the Figurehead House.

"I was going to ask Mrs. Tupman to take them home herself," said Mrs. Triplett, "but she left earlier than I thought she would, and I had no chance to say anything about them. We oughtn't to trust anything as valuable as gold beads that are an heirloom to any outsider, no matter how honest. They might be lost. Suppose you just *wear* them home to her. Do you feel like doing that? And keep them on your neck till she unclasps them with her own hands. Don't leave them with a servant."

Georgina, tired of sitting all day in the booth, was glad of an excuse for a long walk. It was almost six o'clock, but the sun was still high. As she went along, jostled off the narrow sidewalk and back on to it again every few steps by the good-natured crowd

which swarmed the streets at this hour, she could smell supper cooking in the houses along the way. It would be delayed in many homes because the tide was in and people were running down the beach from the various cottages for a dip into the sea. Some carried their bathing suits in bundles, some wore them under raincoats or dressing gowns, and some walked boldly along bare-armed and bare-legged in the suits themselves.

It was a gay scene, with touches of color in every direction. Vivid green grass in all the door-yards, masses of roses and hollyhocks and clematis against the clean white of the houses. Color of every shade in the caps and sweaters and bathing suits and floating motor veils and parasols, jolly laughter everywhere, and friendly voices calling back and forth across the street. It was a holiday town full of happy holiday people.

Georgina, skipping along through the midst of it, added another pretty touch of color to the scene, with her blue ribbons and hat with the forget-me-nots around it, but if her thoughts could have been seen, they would have showed a sober drab. The meeting with Captain Burrell had left her depressed and unhappy. The thought uppermost in her mind was why should there be such a difference in fathers? Why should Peggy Burrell have such an adorable one, and she be left to feel like an orphan?

When she reached the Figurehead House she was

told that Mrs. Tupman had stepped out to a neighbor's for a few minutes but would be right back. She could have left the beads with a member of the family, but having been told to deliver them into the hands of the owner only, she sat down in the swing in the yard to wait.

From where she sat she could look up at the figurehead over the portico. It was the best opportunity she had ever had for studying it closely. Always before she had been limited to the few seconds that were hers in walking or driving by. Now she could sit and gaze at it intently as she pleased.

The fact that it was weather-stained and dark as an Indian with the paint worn off its face in patches, only enhanced its interest in her eyes. It seemed to bear the scars of one who has suffered and come up through great tribulation. No matter how battered this Lady of Mystery was in appearance, to Georgina she still stood for "Hope," clinging to her wreath, still facing the future with head held high, the symbol of all those, who having ships at sea, watch and wait for their home-coming with proud, undaunted courage.

Only an old wooden image, but out of a past of shipwreck and storm its message survived and in some subtle manner found its way into the heart of Georgina.

"And I'll do it, too," she resolved valiantly, looking up at it. "I'm going to hope so hard that he'll

be the way I want him to be, that he'll just *have* to. And if he isn't—then I'll just steer straight onward as if I didn't mind it, so Barby'll never know how disappointed I am. Barby must never know that."

A few minutes later, the gold beads being delivered into Mrs. Tupman's own hands, Georgina took her way homeward, considerably lighter of heart, for those moments of reflection in the swing. As she passed the antique shop a great gray cat on the door-step, rose and stretched itself.

"Nice kitty!" she said, stopping to smooth the thick fur which stood up as he arched his back.

It was "Grandpa," to whose taste for fish she owed her prism and the bit of philosophy which was to brighten not only her own life but all those which touched hers. But she passed on, unconscious of her debt to him.

When she reached the Gray Inn she walked more slowly, for on the beach back of it she saw several people whom she recognized. Captain Burrell was in the water with Peggy and Bailey and half a dozen other children from the Inn. They were all splashing and laughing. They seemed to be having some sort of a game. She stood a moment wishing that she had on her bathing suit and was down in the water with them. She could swim better than any of the children there. But she hadn't been in the sea since Barby left. That was one of the things

she promised in their dark hour of parting, not to go in while Barby was gone.

While she stood there, Mrs. Burrell came out on the piazza of the Inn, followed by the colored nurse with the baby who was just learning to walk. The Captain, seeing them, threw up his hand to signal them. Mrs. Burrell fluttered her handkerchief in reply.

Georgina watched the group in the water a moment longer, then turned and walked slowly on. She felt that if she could do it without having to give up Barby, she'd be willing to change places with Peggy Burrell. She'd take her homely little pale, freckled face, straight hair and—yes, even her limp, for the right to cling to that strong protecting shoulder as Peggy was doing there in the water, and to whisper in his ear, "Dad-o-my-heart."

CHAPTER XXV

A LETTER TO HONG-KONG

THERE are some subjects one hesitates to discuss with one's family. It is easier to seek information from strangers or servants, who do not feel free to come back at you with the disconcerting question, "But why do you ask?"

It was with the half-formed resolution of leading up to a certain one of these difficult subjects if she could, that Georgina wandered down the beach next morning to a little pavilion near the Gray Inn. It was occupied by Peggy Burrell, her baby brother and the colored nurse Melindy.

Georgina, sorely wanting companionship now that Richard and Captain Kidd were off on their yachting trip, was thankful that Mrs. Triplett had met Captain Burrell the day before at the Bazaar, and had agreed with him that Georgina and Peggy ought to be friends because their fathers were. Otherwise, the occupants of the pavilion would have been counted as undesirable playmates being outside the pale of her acquaintance.

Peggy welcomed her joyfully. She wasn't strong enough yet to go off on a whole morning's fishing trip with brother and Daddy, she told Georgina, and her mother was playing bridge on the hotel piazza. Peggy was a little thing, only eight, and Georgina

not knowing what to do to entertain her, resurrected an old play that she had not thought of for several summers. She built Grandfather Shirley's house in the sand.

It took so long to find the right kind of shells with which to make the lanterns for the gate-posts, and to gather the twigs of bayberry and beach plum for the avenues (she had to go into the dunes for them), that the question she was intending to ask Melindy slipped from her mind for a while. It came back to her, however, as she scooped a place in the wall of pebbles and wet sand which stood for the fence.

"Here's the place where the postman drops the mail."

Then she looked up at Melindy, the question on the tip of her tongue. But Peggy, on her knees, was watching her so intently that she seemed to be looking straight into her mouth every time it opened, and her courage failed her. Instead of saying what she had started to say, she exclaimed:

"Here's the hole in the fence where the little pigs squeezed through." Then she told the story that went with this part of the game. When it was time to put in the bee-hives, however, and Peggy volunteered to look up and down the beach for the right kind of a pebble to set the bee-hives on, Georgina took advantage of the moment alone with Melindy. There wasn't time to lead up to the question prop-

erly. There wasn't even time to frame the question in such a way that it would seem a casual, matter-of-course one. Georgina was conscious that the blood was surging up into her cheeks until they must seem as red as fire. She leaned forward toward the sand-pile she was shaping till her curls fell over her face. Then she blurted out:

"How often do husbands write to wives?"

Melindy either did not hear or did not understand, and Georgina had the mortifying experience of repeating the question. It was harder to give utterance to it the second time than the first. She was relieved when Melindy answered without showing any surprise.

"Why, most every week I reckon, when they loves 'em. Leastways white folks do. It comes easy to them to write. An' I lived in one place where the lady got a lettah every othah day."

"But I mean when the husband's gone for a long, long time, off to sea or to another country, and is dreadfully busy, like Captain Burrell is when he's on his ship."

Melindy gave a short laugh. "Huh! Let me tell you, honey, when a man *wants* to write he's gwine to write, busy or no busy."

Later, Georgina went home pondering Melindy's answer. "Most every week when they love's 'em. Sometimes every other day." And Barby had had no letter for over four months.

Something happened that afternoon which had never happened before in all Georgina's experience. She was taken to the Gray Inn to call. Mrs. Triplett, dressed in her new black summer silk, took her.

"As long as Barbara isn't here to pay some attention to that Mrs. Burrell," Tippy said to Belle, "it seems to me it's my place as next of kin. The Captain couldn't get done saying nice things about Justin."

Evidently, she approved of both Mrs. Burrell and Peggy, for when each begged that Georgina be allowed to stay to supper she graciously gave permission.

"Peggy has taken the wildest fancy to you, dear," Mrs. Burrell said in an aside to Georgina. "You gave her a beautiful morning on the beach. The poor little thing has suffered so much with her lame knee, that we are grateful to anyone who makes her forget all that she has gone through. It's only last week that she could have the brace taken off. She hasn't been able to run and play like other children for two years, but we're hoping she may outgrow the trouble in time."

The dining-room of the Gray Inn overlooked the sea, and was so close to the water one had the feeling of being in a boat, when looking out of its windows. There were two South American transports in the harbor. Some of the officers had come ashore and were dining with friends at the Gray Inn. Af-

terwards they stayed to dance a while in the long parlor with the young ladies of the party.

Peggy and Georgina sat on the piazza just outside one of the long French windows, where they could watch the gay scene inside. It seemed almost as gay outside, when one turned to look across the harbor filled with moving lights. Captain and Mrs. Burrell were outside also. They sat farther down the piazza, near the railing, talking to one of the officers who was not dancing. Once when the music stopped, Peggy turned to Georgina to say:

"Do you hear Daddy speaking Spanish to that officer from South America? Doesn't he do it well? I can understand a little of what they say because we lived in South America a while last year. We join him whenever he is stationed at a port where officers can take their families. He says that children of the navy have to learn to be regular gypsies. I love going to new places. How many languages can your father speak?"

Georgina, thus suddenly questioned, felt that she would rather die than acknowledge that she knew so little of her father that she could not answer. She was saved the mortification of confessing it, however, by the music striking up again at that moment.

"Oh, I can play that!" she exclaimed. "That's the dance of the tarantula. Isn't it a weird sort of thing?"

The air of absorbed interest with which Georgina turned to listen to the music made Peggy forget her question, and listen in the same way. She wanted to do everything in the same way that Georgina did it, and from that moment that piece of music held special charm for her because Georgina called it weird.

The next time Georgina glanced down the piazza Mrs. Burrell was alone. In her dimly-lighted corner, she looked like one of the pretty summer girls one sees sometimes on a magazine cover. She was all in white with a pale blue wrap of some kind about her that was so soft and fleecy it looked like a pale blue cloud. Georgina found herself looking down that way often, with admiring glances. She happened to have her eyes turned that way when the Captain came back and stood beside her chair. The blue wrap had slipped from her shoulders without her notice, and he stooped and picked it up. Then he drew the soft, warm thing up around her, and bending over, laid his cheek for just an instant against hers.

It was such a fleeting little caress that no one saw it but Georgina, and she turned her eyes away instantly, feeling that she had no right to look, yet glad that she had seen, because of the warm glow it sent through her. She couldn't tell why, but somehow the world seemed a happier sort of place for everybody because such things happened in it.

"I wonder," she thought wistfully, as her eyes followed the graceful steps of the foreign dancers and her thoughts stayed with what she had just witnessed, "I wonder if that had been Barby and my father, would *he?*"——

But she did not finish even to herself the question which rose up to worry her. It came back every time she recalled the little scene.

On the morning after her visit to the Gray Inn she climbed up on the piano stool when she had finished practising her scales. She wanted a closer view of the portrait which hung over it. It was an oil painting of her father at the age of five. He wore kilts and little socks with plaid tops, and he carried a white rabbit in his arms. Georgina knew every inch of the canvas, having admired it from the time she was first held up to it in someone's arms to "see the pretty bunny." Now she looked at it long and searchingly.

Then she opened the book-case and took out an old photograph album. There were several pictures of her father in that. One taken with his High School class, and one with a group of young medical students, and one in the white service dress of an assistant surgeon of the navy. None of them corresponded with her dim memory of him.

Then she went upstairs to Barby's room, and stood before the bureau, studying the picture upon it in a large silver frame. It was taken in a standing

position and had been carefully colored, so that she knew accurately every detail of the dress uniform of a naval surgeon from the stripes of gold lace and maroon velvet on the sleeves, to the eagle on the belt buckle and the sword knot dangling over the scabbard. There were various medals pinned on his breast which had always interested her.

But this morning it was not the uniform or the decorations which claimed her attention. It was the face itself. She was looking for something in the depths of those serious dark eyes, that she had seen in Captain Burrell's when he looked at Peggy; something more than a smile, something that made his whole face light up till you felt warm and happy just to look at him. She wondered if the closely-set lips she was studying could curve into a welcoming smile if anybody ran to meet him with happy outstretched arms. But the picture was baffling and disappointing, because it was a profile view.

Presently, she picked it up and carried it to her own room, placing it on the table where she always sat to write. She had screwed up her courage at last, to the point of writing the letter which long ago she had decided ought to be written by somebody.

Once Barby said, "When you can't think of anything to put in a letter, look at the person's picture, and pretend you're talking to it." Georgina followed that advice now. But one cannot talk en-

thusiastically to a listener who continues to show you only his profile.

Suddenly, her resentment flamed hot against this handsome, averted face which was all she knew of a father. She thought bitterly that he had no business to be such a stranger to her that she didn't even know what he looked like when he smiled. Something of the sternness of her old Pilgrim forbears crept into her soul as she sat there judging him and biting the end of her pen. She glanced down at the sheet of paper on which she had painstakingly written "Dear Father." Then she scratched out the words, feeling she could not honestly call him that when he was such a stranger. Taking a clean sheet of paper, she wrote even more painstakingly:

"Dear Sir: There are two reesons——"

Then she looked up in doubt about the spelling of that last word. She might have gone downstairs and consulted the dictionary but her experience had proved that a dictionary is an unsatisfactory book when one does not know how to spell a word. It is by mere chance that what one is looking for can be found. After thinking a moment she put her head out of the window and called softly down to Belle, who was sewing on the side porch. She called softly so that Tippy could not hear and answer and maybe add the remark, "But why do you ask? Are you writing to your mother?"

Belle spelled the word for her, and taking another

sheet of paper Georgina made a fresh start. This time she did not hesitate over the spelling, but scribbled recklessly on until all that was crowding up to be said was on the paper.

"Dear Sir: There are two reasons for writing this. One is about your wife. Cousin Mehitable says something is eating her heart out, and I thought you ought to know. Maybe as you can cure so many strange diseeses you can do something for her. The other is to ask you to send us another picture of yourself. The only ones we have of you are looking off sideways, and I can't feel as well acquainted with you as if I could look into your eyes.

"There is a lovely father staying at the Gray Inn. He is Peggy Burrell's. He is a naval officer, too. It makes me feel like an orfan when I see him going down the street holding her hand. He asked me to tell him all about where you are and what you are doing, because you cured him once on a hospital ship, and I was ashamed to tell him that I didn't know because Barby has not had a letter from you for over four months. Please don't let on to her that I wrote this. She doesn't know that I was under the bed when Cousin Mehitable was talking about you, and saying that everybody thinks it is queer you never come home. If you can do only one of the things I asked, please do the first one. Yours truly, Georgina Huntingdon."

Having blotted the letter, Georgina read it over

carefully, finding two words that did not look quite right, although she did not know what was the matter with them. So she called softly out of the window again to Belle:

"How do you spell diseases?"

Belle told her but added the question, "Why do you ask a word like that? Whose diseases can you be writing about?"

Georgina drew in her head without answering. She could not seek help in that quarter again, especially for such a word as "orfan." After studying over it a moment she remembered there was a poem in "Songs for the Little Ones at Home," called "The Orphan Nosegay Girl."

A trip downstairs for the tattered volume gave her the word she wanted, and soon the misspelled one was scratched out and rewritten. There were now three unsightly blots on the letter and she hovered over them a moment, her pride demanding that she should make a clean, fair copy. But it seemed such an endless task to rewrite it from beginning to end, that she finally decided to send it as it stood.

Addressed, stamped and sealed, it was ready at last and she dropped it into the mail-box. Then she had a moment of panic. It was actually started on its way to Hong-Kong and nothing in her power could stop it or bring it back. She wondered if she hadn't done exactly the wrong thing, and made a bad matter worse.

CHAPTER XXVI

PEGGY JOINS THE RAINBOW-MAKERS

ONLY one more thing happened before Barby's return that is worth recording. Georgina went to spend the way at the Gray Inn. Captain Burrell, himself, came to ask her. Peggy had to be put back into her brace again he said. He was afraid it had been taken off too soon. She was very uncomfortable and unhappy on account of it. They would be leaving in the morning, much earlier than they had intended, because it was necessary for her physician to see her at once, and quite probable that she would have to go back to the sanitarium for a while. She didn't want to leave Provincetown, because she did not want to go away from Georgina.

"You have no idea how she admires you," the Captain added, "or how she tries to copy you. Her dream of perfect happiness is to look and act just like you. Yesterday she made her mother tie a big pink bow on her poor little cropped head because you passed by wearing one on your curls. You can cheer her up more than anyone else in the world."

So Georgina, touched both by the Captain's evident distress over Peggy's returning lameness, and

Peggy's fondness for her, went gladly. The knowledge that everything she said and did was admired, made it easy for her to entertain the child, and the pity that welled up in her heart every time she watched the thin little body move around in the tiresome brace, made her long to do something that would really ease the burden of such a misfortune.

Mrs. Burrell was busy packing all morning, and in the afternoon went down the street to do some shopping that their hurried departure made necessary. Peggy brought out her post-card album, in which to fasten all the postals she had added to her collection while on the Cape. Among them was one of the Figurehead House, showing "Hope" perched over the portico.

"Bailey says that's a sea-cook," Peggy explained gravely. "A sea-cook who was such a wooden-head that when he made doughnuts they turned green. He's got one in his hand that he's about to heave into the sea."

"Oh, horrors! No!" exclaimed Georgina, as scandalized as if some false report had been circulated about one of her family.

"That is Hope with a wreath in her hand, looking up with her head held high, just as she did when she was on the prow of a gallant ship. Whenever I have any trouble or disappointment I think of her, and she helps me to bear up and be brave, and go on as if nothing had happened."

"How?" asked Peggy, gazing with wondering eyes at the picture of the figurehead, which was too small on the postal to be very distinct. Anything that Georgina respected and admired so deeply, Peggy wanted to respect and admire in the same way, but it was puzzling to understand just what it was that Georgina saw in that wooden figure to make her feel so. Accustomed to thinking of it in Bailey's way, as a sea-cook with a doughnut, it was hard to switch around to a point of view that showed it as Hope with a wreath, or to understand how it could help one to be brave about anything.

Something of her bewilderment crept into the wondering "why," and Georgina hesitated, a bit puzzled herself. It was hard to explain to a child two years younger what had been taught to her by the old Towncrier.

"You wait till I run home and get my prism," she answered. "Then I can show you right away, and we can play a new kind of tag game with it."

Before Peggy could protest that she would rather have her question unanswered than be left alone, Georgina was off and running up the beach as fast as her little white shoes could carry her. Her cheeks were as red as the coral necklace she wore, when she came back breathless from her flying trip.

There followed a few moments of rapture for Peggy, when the beautiful crystal pendant was placed in her own hands, and she looked through it into a

world transformed by the magic of its coloring. She saw the room changed in a twinkling, as when a fairy wand transforms a mantle of homespun to cloth-of-gold. Through the open window she saw an enchanted harbor filled with a fleet of rainbows. Every sail was outlined with one, every mast edged with lines of red and gold and blue. And while she looked, and at the same time listened, Georgina's explanation caught some of the same glamor, and sank deep into her tender little heart.

That was the way that *she* could change the world for people she loved—put a rainbow around their troubles by being so cheery and hopeful that everything would be brighter just because she was there. To keep Hope at the prow simply meant that she mustn't get discouraged about her knee. No matter how much it hurt her or the brace bothered her, she must bear up and steer right on. To do that bravely, without any fretting, was the surest way in the world to put a rainbow around her father's troubles.

Thus Georgina mixed her "line to live by" and her prism philosophy, but it was clear enough to the child who listened with heart as well as ears. And clear enough to the man who sat just outside the open window on the upper porch, with his pipe, listening also as he gazed off to sea.

"The poor little lamb," he said to himself. "To

think of that baby trying to bear up and be brave on *my* account! It breaks me all up."

A few minutes later as he started across the hall, Peggy, seeing him pass her door, called to him.

"Oh, Daddy! Come look through this wonderful fairy glass. You'll think the whole world is bewitched."

She was lying back in a long steamer chair, and impatient to reach him, she started to climb out as he entered the room. But she had not grown accustomed to the brace again, and she stumbled clumsily on account of it. He caught her just in time to save her from falling, but the prism, the shining crystal pendant, dropped from her hands and struck the rocker of a chair in its fall to the floor.

She gave a frightened cry, and stood holding her breath while Georgina stooped and picked it up. It was in two pieces now. The long, radiant point, cut in many facets like a diamond, was broken off.

Georgina, pale and trembling at this sudden destruction of her greatest treasure, turned her back, and for one horrible moment it was all she could do to keep from bursting out crying. Peggy, seeing her turn away and realizing all that her awkwardness was costing Georgina, buried her face on her father's shoulder and went into such a wild paroxysm of sobbing and crying that all his comforting failed to comfort her.

"Oh, I wish I'd *died* first," she wailed. "She'll never love me again. She said it was her most precious treasure, and now I've broken it——"

"There, there, there," soothed the Captain, patting the thin little arm reached up to cling around his neck. "Georgina knows it was an accident. She's going to forgive my poor little Peggykins for what she couldn't help. She doesn't mind its being broken as much as you think."

He looked across at Georgina, appealingly, helplessly. Peggy's grief was so uncontrollable he was growing alarmed. Georgina wanted to cry out:

"Oh, I *do* mind! How can you say that? I can't stand it to have my beautiful, beautiful prism ruined!"

She was only a little girl herself, with no comforting shoulder to run to. But something came to her help just then. She remembered the old silver porringer with its tall, slim-looped letters. She remembered there were some things she could not do. She *had* to be brave now, because her name had been written around that shining rim through so many brave generations. She could not deepen the hurt of this poor little thing already nearly frantic over what she had done. Tippy's early lessons carried her gallantly through now. She ran across the room to where Peggy sat on her father's knee, and put an arm around her.

"Listen, Peggy," she said brightly. "There's a

piece of prism for each of us now. Isn't that nice? You take one and I'll keep the other, and that will make you a member of our club. We call it the Rainbow Club, and we're running a race seeing who can make the most bright spots in the world, by making people happy. There's just four members in it so far; Richard and me and the president of the bank and Mr. Locke, the artist, who made the pictures in your blue and gold fairy-tale book. And you can be the fifth. But you'll have to begin this minute by stopping your crying, or you can't belong. What did I tell you about fretting?"

And Peggy stopped. Not instantly, she couldn't do that after such a hard spell. The big sobs kept jerking her for a few minutes no matter how hard she tried to stiffle them; but she sat up and let her father wipe her face on his big handkerchief, and she smiled her bravest, to show that she was worthy of membership in the new club.

The Captain suddenly drew Georgina to his other knee and kissed her.

"You blessed little rainbow maker!" he exclaimed. "I'd like to join your club myself. What a happy world this would be if everybody belonged to it."

Peggy clasped her hands together beseechingly.

"Oh, *please* let him belong, Georgina. I'll lend him my piece of prism half the time."

"Of course he can," consented Georgina. "But he can belong without having a prism. Grown people

don't need anything to help them remember about making good times in the world."

"I wonder," said the Captain, as if he were talking to himself. Georgina, looking at him shyly from the corner of her eye, wondered what it was he wondered.

It was almost supper time when she went home. She had kept the upper half of the prism which had the hole in it, and it dangled from her neck on the pink ribbon as she walked.

"If only Barby could have seen it first," she mourned. "I wouldn't mind it so much. But she'll never know how beautiful it was."

But every time that thought came to her it was followed by a recollection which made her tingle with happiness. It was the Captain's deep voice saying tenderly, "You blessed little rainbow-maker!"

CHAPTER XXVII

A MODERN "ST. GEORGE AND THE DRAGON"

BARBY was at home again. Georgina, hearing the jangle of a bell, ran down the street to meet the old Towncrier with the news. She knew now, how he felt when he wanted to go through the town ringing his bell and calling out the good tidings about his Danny to all the world. That's the way she felt her mother's home-coming ought to be proclaimed. It was such a joyful thing to have her back again.

And Grandfather Shirley wasn't going to be blind, Georgina confided in her next breath. The sight of both eyes would be all right in time. They were *so* thankful about that. And Barby had brought her the darlingest little pink silk parasol ever made or dreamed of, all the way from Louisville, and some beaten biscuit and a comb of honey from the beehives in her old home garden.

It was wonderful how much news Georgina managed to crowd into the short time that it took to walk back to the gate. The Burrells had left town and Belle had gone home, and Richard had sent her a postal card from Bar Harbor with a snapshot of himself and Captain Kidd on it. And—she low-

ered her voice almost to a whisper as she told the next item:

"Barby knows about Danny! Belle said I might tell her if she'd promise not to let it get back to Mr. Potter."

They had reached the house by this time, and Georgina led him in to Barby who rose to welcome him with both hands outstretched.

"Oh, Uncle Darcy," she exclaimed. "I know—and I'm *so* glad. And Justin will be, too. I sent Georgina's letter to him the very day it came. I knew he'd be so interested, and it can do no harm for him to know, away off there in the interior of China."

Georgina was startled, remembering the letter which *she* had sent to the interior of China. Surely her father wouldn't send that back to Barby! Such a panic seized her at the bare possibility of such a thing, that she did not hear Uncle Darcy's reply. She wondered what Barby would say if it should come back to her. Then she recalled what had happened the first few moments of Barby's return and wondered what made her think of it.

Barby's first act on coming into the house, was to walk over to the old secretary where the mail was always laid, and look to see if any letters were waiting there for her. And that was before she had even stopped to take off her veil or gloves. There were three which had arrived that morning,

but she only glanced at them and tossed them aside. The one she wanted wasn't there. Georgina had turned away and pretended that she wasn't watching, but she was, and for a moment she felt that the sun had gone behind a cloud, Barby looked so disappointed.

But it was only for a moment, for Barby immediately began to tell about an amusing experience she had had on her way home, and started upstairs to take off her hat, with Georgina tagging after to ask a thousand questions, just as she had been tagging ever since.

And later she had thrown her arms around her mother, exclaiming as she held her fast, "You haven't changed a single bit, Barby," and Barby answered gaily:

"What did you expect, dearest, in a few short weeks? White hair and spectacles?"

"But it doesn't seem like a few short weeks," sighed Georgina. "It seems as if years full of things had happened, and that I'm as old as you are."

Now as Uncle Darcy recounted some of these happenings, and Barby realized how many strange experiences Georgina had lived through during her absence, how many new acquaintances she had made and how much she had been allowed to go about by herself, she understood why the child felt so much older. She understood still better that night as she sat brushing Georgina's curls. The little girl

on the footstool at her knee was beginning to reach up—was beginning to ask questions about the strange grown-up world whose sayings and doings are always so puzzling to little heads.

"Barby," she asked hesitatingly, "what do people mean exactly, when they say they have other fish to fry?"

"Oh, just other business to attend to or something else they'd rather do."

"But when they shrug their shoulders at the same time," persisted Georgina.

"A shrug can stand for almost anything," answered Barby. "Sometimes it says meaner things than words can convey."

Then came the inevitable question which made Georgina wish that she had not spoken.

"But why do you ask, dear? Tell me how the expression was used, and I can explain better."

Now Georgina could not understand why she had brought up the subject. It had been uppermost in her mind all evening, but every time it reached the tip of her tongue she drove it back. That is, until this last time. Then it seemed to say itself. Having gone this far she could not lightly change the subject as an older person might have done. Barby was waiting for an answer. It came in a moment, halting but truthful.

"That day I was at the Bazaar, you know, and everybody was saying how nice I looked, dressed

up like a little girl of long ago, I heard Mrs. Whitman say to Miss Minnis that one would think that Justin Huntingdon would want to come home once or twice in a lifetime to see me; and Miss Minnis shrugged her shoulders, this way, and said:

" 'Oh, he has other fish to fry.' "

Georgina, with her usual aptitude for mimicry, made the shrug so eloquent that Barby understood exactly what Miss Minnis intended to convey, and what it had meant to the wondering child.

"Miss Minnis is an old cat!" she exclaimed impatiently. Then she laid down the brush, and gathering Georgina's curls into one hand, turned her head so that she could look into the troubled little face.

"Tell me, Baby," she demanded. "Have you heard anyone else say things like that?"

"Yes," admitted Georgina, "several times. And yesterday a woman who came into the bakery while I was getting the rolls Tippy sent me for, asked me if I was Doctor Huntingdon's little girl. And when I said yes, she asked me when he was coming home."

"And what did you say?"

"Well, I thought she hadn't any right to ask, specially in the way she made her question sound. She doesn't belong in this town, anyhow. She's only one of the summer boarders. So I drew myself up the way the Duchess always did in 'The Fortunes of Romney Tower.' Don't you remember? and I

said, 'It will probably be some time, Madam.' Then I took up my bag of hot rolls and marched out. I think that word Madam always sounds so freezing, when you say it the way the Duchess was always doing."

"Oh, you ridiculous baby!" exclaimed Barby, clasping her close and kissing her again and again. Then seeing the trouble still lingering in the big brown eyes, she took the little face between her hands and looked into it long and intently, as if reading her thoughts.

"Georgina," she said presently, "I understand now, what is the matter. You're wondering the same thing about your father that these busybodies are. It's my fault though. I took it for granted that you understood about his long absence. I never dreamed that it was hurting you in any way."

Georgina hid her face in Barby's lap, her silence proof enough that her mother had guessed aright. For a moment or two Barby's hand strayed caressingly over the bowed head. Then she said:

"I wonder if you remember this old story I used to tell you, beginning, 'St. George of Merry England was the youngest and the bravest of the seven champions of Christendom. Clad in bright armor with his magic sword Ascalon by his side, he used to travel on his war horse in far countries in search of adventure.' Do you remember that?"

Georgina nodded yes without raising her head.

"Then you remember he came to a beach where the Princess Saba called to him to flee, because the Dragon, the most terrible monster ever seen on earth, was about to come up out of the sea and destroy the city. Every year it came up to do this, and only the sacrifice of a beautiful maiden could stop it from destroying the people.

"But undismayed, Saint George refused to flee. He stayed on and fought the dragon, and wounded it, and bound it with the maiden's sash and led it into the market place where it was finally killed. And the people were forever freed from the terrible monster because of his prowess. Do you remember all that?"

Again Georgina nodded. She knew the story well. Every Christmas as far back as she could remember she had eaten her bit of plum pudding from a certain rare old blue plate, on which was the picture of Saint George, the dragon and the Princess.

"Nowadays," Barby went on, "because men do not ride around 'clad in bright armor,' doing knightly deeds, people do not recognize them as knights. But your father is doing something that is just as great and just as brave as any of the deeds of any knight who ever drew a sword. Over in foreign ports where he has been stationed, is a strange disease which seems to rise out of the marshes every year, just as the dragon did, and threaten the health and the lives of the people. It is especially bad on ship-

board, and it is really harder to fight than a real dragon would be, because it is an invisible foe, a sickness that comes because of a tiny, unseen microbe.

"Your father has watched it, year after year, attacking not only the sailors of foreign navies but our own men, when they have to live in those ports, and he made up his mind to go on a quest for this invisible monster, and kill it if possible. It is such a very important quest that the Government was glad to grant him a year's leave of absence from the service.

"He was about to come home to see us first, when he met an old friend, a very wealthy Englishman, who has spent the greater part of his life collecting rare plants and studying their habits. He has written several valuable books on Botany, and the last ten years he has been especially interested in the plants of China. He was getting ready to go to the very places that your father was planning to visit, and he had with him an interpreter and a young American assistant. When he invited your father to join him it was an opportunity too great to be refused. This Mr. Bowles is familiar with the country and the people, even speaks the language himself a little. He had letters to many of the high officials, and could be of the greatest assistance to your father in many ways, even though he did not stay with the party. He could always be in communication with it.

"So, of course, he accepted the invitation. It is far better for the quest and far better for himself to be with such companions.

"I am not uneasy about him, knowing he has friends within call in case of sickness and accident, and he will probably be able to accomplish his purpose more quickly with the help they will be able to give. You know he has to go off into all sorts of dirty, uncomfortable places, risk his own health and safety, go among the sick and suffering where he can watch the progress of the disease under different conditions.

"The whole year may be spent in a vain search, with nothing to show for it at the end, and even if he is successful and finds the cause of this strange illness and a remedy, his only reward will be the satisfaction of knowing he has done something to relieve the suffering of his fellow-creatures. People can understand the kind of bravery that shows. If he were rescuing one person from a burning house or a sinking boat they would cry out, 'What a hero.' But they don't seem to appreciate this kind of rescue work. It will do a thousand times more good, because it will free the whole navy from the teeth of the dragon.

"If there were a war, people would not expect him to come home. We are giving him up to his country now, just as truly as if he were in the midst of battle. A soldier's wife and a soldier's daughter—it is the proof of our love and loyalty, Georgina, to bear his

long absence cheerfully, no matter how hard that is to do; to be proud that he can serve his country if not with his sword, with the purpose and prowess of a Saint George."

Barby's eyes were wet but there was a starry light in them, as she lifted Georgina's head and kissed her. Two little arms were thrown impulsively around her neck.

"Oh, Barby! I'm so sorry that I didn't know all that before! I didn't understand, and I felt real ugly about it when I heard people whispering and saying things as if he didn't love us any more. And —when I said my prayers at bedtime—I didn't sing 'Eternal Father Strong to Save' a single night while you were gone."

Comforting arms held her close.

"Why didn't you write and tell mother about it?"

"I didn't want to make you feel bad. I was afraid from what Cousin Mehitable said you were going to *die*. I worried and worried over it. Oh, I had the miserablest time!"

Another kiss interrupted her. "But you'll never do that way again, Georgina. Promise me that no matter what happens you'll come straight to me and have it set right."

The promise was given, with what remorse and penitence no one could know but Georgina, recalling the letter she had written, beginning with a stern "Dear Sir." But to justify herself, she asked after the hair-brushing had begun again:

"But Barby, why has he stayed away from home four whole years? He wasn't hunting dragons before this, was he?"

"No, but I thought you understood that, too. He didn't come back here to the Cape because there were important things which kept him in Washington during his furloughs. Maybe you were too small to remember that the time you and I were spending the summer in Kentucky he had planned to join us there. But he wired that his best friend in the Navy, an old Admiral, was at the point of death, and didn't want him to leave him. The Admiral had befriended him in so many ways when he first went into the service that there was nothing else for your father to do but stay with him as long as he was needed. You were only six then, and I was afraid the long, hot trip might make you sick, so I left you with mamma while I went on for several weeks. Surely you remember something of that time."

"No, just being in Kentucky is all I remember, and your going away for a while."

"And the next time some business affairs of his own kept him in Washington, something very important. You were just getting over the measles and I didn't dare take you, so you stayed with Tippy. So you see it wasn't your father's fault that he didn't see you. He had expected you to be brought down to Washington."

Georgina pondered over the explanation a while,

then presently said with a sigh, "Goodness me, how easy it is to look at things the wrong way."

Soon after her voice blended with Barby's in a return to the long neglected bedtime rite:

"Oh, hear us when we cry to Thee,
For those in peril on the sea."

Afterward, her troubles all smoothed and explained away, she lay in the dark, comforted and at peace with the world. Once a little black doubt thrust its head up like a snake, to remind her of Melindy's utterance, "When a man *wants* to write, he's gwine to write, busy or no busy." But even that found an explanation in her thoughts.

Of course, Melindy meant just ordinary men. Not those who had great deeds to do in the world like her father. Probably Saint George himself hadn't written to his family often, if he had a family. He couldn't be expected to. He had "other fish to fry," and it was perfectly right and proper for him to put his mind on the frying of them to the neglect of everything else.

The four months' long silence was unexplained save for this comforting thought, but Georgina worried about it no longer. Up from below came the sound of keys touched softly as Barby sang an old lullaby. She sang it in a glad, trustful sort of way.

"He is far across the sea,
But he's coming home to me,
Baby mine!"

Lying there in the dark, Georgina composed another letter to send after her first one, and next morning this is what she wrote, sitting up in the willow tree with a magazine on her knees for a writing table:

"Dearest Father: I am sorry that I wrote that last letter, because everything is different from what I thought it was. I did not know until Barby came home and told me, that you are just as brave as St. George was, clad in bright armor, when he went to rescue the people from the dragon. I hope you get the monster that comes up out of the sea every year after the poor sailors. Barby says we are giving you to our country in this way, as much as if there was war, so now I'm prouder of having a St.-George-and-the-dragon-kind of a father than one like Peggy Burrell's, even if she does know him well enough to call him 'Dad-o'-my-heart.' Even if people don't understand, and say things about your never coming home to see us, we are going to 'still bear up and steer right onward,' because that's our line to live by. And we hope as hard as we can every day, that you'll get the mike-robe you are in kwest of. Your loving little daughter, Georgina Huntingdon."

CHAPTER XXVIII

THE DOCTOR'S DISCOVERY

IN due time the letter written in the willow tree reached the city of Hong-Kong, and was carried to the big English hotel, overlooking the loveliest of Chinese harbors. But it was not delivered to Doctor Huntingdon. It was piled on top of all the other mail which lay there, awaiting his return. Under it was Georgina's first letter to him and the one she had written to her mother about Dan Darcy and the rifle. And under that was the one which Barbara called the "rainbow letter," and then at least half a dozen from Barbara herself, with the beautiful colored photograph of the Towncrier and his lass. Also there were several bundles of official-looking documents and many American newspapers.

Nothing had been forwarded to him for two months, because he had left instructions to hold his mail until further notice. The first part of that time he was moving constantly from one out-of-the-way place to another where postal delivery was slow and uncertain. The last part of that time he was lying ill in the grip of the very disease which he had gone out to study and to conquer.

He was glad then to be traveling in the wake of

the friendly old Englishman and his party. Through their interpreter, arrangements were made to have him carried to one of the tents of a primitive sort of a hospital, kept by some native missionaries. The Englishman's young assistant went with him. He was a quiet fellow whom Mr. Bowles had jokingly dubbed David the silent, because it was so hard to make him talk. But Doctor Huntingdon, a reserved, silent man himself, had been attracted to him by that very trait.

During the months they had been thrown together so much, Dave had taken great interest in the Doctor's reports of the experiments he was making in treating the disease. When the Doctor was told that Mr. Bowles had gone back to the coast, having found what he wanted and made his notes for his next book, and consequently Dave was free to stay and nurse him, he gave a sigh of relief.

Dave stopped his thanks almost gruffly.

"There's more than one reason for my staying," he said. "I've been sick among strangers in a strange country, myself, and I know how it feels. Besides, I'm interested in seeing if this new treatment of yours works out on a white man as well as it did on these natives. I'll be doing as much in the way of scientific research, keeping a chart on you, as if I were taking notes for Mr. Bowles."

That was a long speech for Dave, the longest that he made during the Doctor's illness. But in the days

which followed, one might well have wondered if there was not a greater reason than those he offered for such devoted attendance. He was always within call, always so quick to notice a want that usually a wish was gratified before it could be expressed. His was a devotion too constant to be prompted merely by sympathy for a fellow-country-man or interest in medical experiments.

Once, when the Doctor was convalescing, he opened his eyes to find his silent attendant sitting beside him reading, and studied him for some time, unobserved.

"Dave," he said, after watching him a while—"it's the queerest thing—lately every time I look at you I'm reminded of home. You must resemble someone I used to know back there, but for the life of me I can't recall who."

Dave answered indifferently, without glancing up from the page.

"There's probably a thousand fellows that look like me. I'm medium height and about every third person you see back in the States has gray eyes like mine, and just the ordinary every-day sort of features that I have."

The Doctor made no answer. It never would have occurred to him to tell Dave in what way his face differed from the many others of his type. There was a certain kindliness of twinkle in the gray eyes at times, and always a straightforward honesty of

gaze that made one instinctively trust him. There was strength of purpose in the resolute set of his mouth, and one could not imagine him being turned back on any road which he had made up his mind to travel to the end.

Several days after that when the Doctor was sitting up outside the tent, the resemblance to someone whom he could not recall, puzzled him again. Dave was whittling, his lips pursed up as he whistled softly in an absent-minded sort of way.

"Dave," exclaimed the Doctor, "there's something in the way you sit there, whittling and whistling that brings little old Provincetown right up before my eyes. I can see old Captain Ames sitting there on the wharf on a coil of rope, whittling just as you are doing, and joking with Sam and the crew as they pile into the boat to go out to the weirs. I can see the nets spread out to dry alongshore, and smell tar and codfish as plain as if it were here right under my nose. And down in Fishburn Court there's the little house that was always a second home to me, with Uncle Darcy pottering around in the yard, singing his old sailors' songs."

The Doctor closed his eyes and drew in a long, slow breath.

"Um! There's the most delicious smell coming out of that kitchen—blueberry pies that Aunt Elspeth's baking. What wouldn't I give this minute for one of those good, juicy blueberry pies of hers, smok-

ing hot. I can smell it clear over here in China. There never was anything in the world that tasted half so good. I was always tagging around after Uncle Darcy, as I called him. He was the Town-crier, and one of those staunch, honest souls who make you believe in the goodness of God and man no matter what happens to shake the foundations of your faith."

The Doctor opened his eyes and looked up inquiringly, startled by the knocking over of the stool on which Dave had been sitting. He had risen abruptly and gone inside the tent.

"Go on," he called back. "I can hear you."

He seemed to be looking for something, for he was striding up and down in its narrow space. The Doctor raised his voice a trifle.

"That's all I had to say. I didn't intend to bore you talking about people and places you never heard of. But it just came over me in a big wave—that feeling of homesickness that makes you feel you've got to get back or die. Did you ever have it?"

"Yes," came the answer in an indifferent tone. "Several times."

"Well, it's got me now, right by the throat."

Presently he called, "Dave, while you're in there I wish you'd look in my luggage and see what newspapers are folded up with it. I have a dim recollection that a *Provincetown Advocate* came about the time I was taken sick and I never opened it.

"Ah, that's it!" he exclaimed when Dave emerged presently, holding out the newspaper. "Look at the cut across the top of the first page. Old Provincetown itself. It's more for the name of the town printed across that picture of the harbor than for the news that I keep on taking the paper. Ordinarily, I never do more than glance at the news items, but there's time to-day to read even the advertisements. You've no idea how good those familiar old names look to me."

He read some of them aloud, smiling over the memories they awakened. But he read without an auditor, for Dave found he had business with one of the missionaries, and put off to attend to it. On his return he was greeted with the announcement:

"Dave, I want to get out of here. I'm sure there must be a big pile of mail waiting for me right now in Hong-Kong, and I'm willing to risk the trip. Let's start back to-morrow."

Several days later they were in Hong-Kong, enjoying the luxuries of civilization in the big hotel. Still weak from his recent illness and fatigued by the hardships of his journey, Doctor Huntingdon did not go down to lunch the day of their arrival. It was served in his room, and as he ate he stopped at intervals to take another dip into the pile of mail which had been brought up to him.

In his methodical way he opened the letters in the order of their arrival, beginning with the one whose

postmark showed the earliest date. It took a long time to finish eating on account of these pauses. Hop Ching was bringing in his coffee when Dave came back, having had not only his lunch in the dining-room, but a stroll through the streets afterward. He found Doctor Huntingdon with a photograph propped up in front of him, studying it intently while Hop Ching served the coffee. The Doctor passed the photograph to Dave.

"Take it over to the window where you can get a good light on it," he commanded. "Isn't that a peach of a picture? That's my little daughter and the old friend I'm always quoting. The two seem to be as great chums as he and I used to be. I don't want to bore you, Dave, but I would like to read you this letter that she wrote to her mother, and her mother sent on to me. In the first place I'm proud of her writing such a letter. I had no idea she could express herself so well, and secondly the subject matter makes it an interesting document.

"On my little girl's birthday Uncle Darcy took her out in his boat, *The Betsey*. The name of that old boat certainly does sound good to me! He told her—but wait! I'd rather read it to you in her own words. It'll give you such a good idea of the old man. Perhaps I ought to explain that he had a son who got into trouble some ten years ago, and left home. He was just a little chap when I saw him

The Townsrier and his Lass

last, hardly out of dresses, the fall I left home for college.

"Uncle Darcy and Aunt Elspeth were fairly foolish about him. He had come into their lives late, you see, after their older children died. I don't believe it would make any difference to them what he'd do. They would welcome him back from the very gallows if he'd only come. His mother never has believed he did anything wrong, and the hope of the old man's life is that his 'Danny,' as he calls him, will make good in some way—do something to wipe out the stain on his name and come back to him."

The Doctor paused as if waiting for some encouragement to read.

"Go on," said Dave. "I'd like to hear it, best in the world."

He turned his chair so that he could look out of the window at the harbor. The Chinese sampans of every color were gliding across the water like a flock of gaily-hued swans. He seemed to be dividing his attention between those native boats and the letter when the Doctor first began to read. It was Georgina's rainbow letter, and the colors of the rainbow were repeated again and again by the reds and yellows and blues of that fleet of sampans.

But as the Doctor read on Dave listened more intently, so intently, in fact, that he withdrew his attention entirely from the window, and leaning for-

ward, buried his face in his hands, his elbows resting on his knees. The Doctor found him in this attitude when he looked up at the end, expecting some sort of comment. He was used to Dave's silences, but he had thought this surely would call forth some remark. Then as he studied the bowed figure, it flashed into his mind that the letter must have touched some chord in the boy's own past. Maybe Dave had an old father somewhere, longing for his return, and the memory was breaking him all up.

Silently, the Doctor turned aside to the pile of letters still unread. Georgina's stern little note beginning "Dear Sir" was the next in order and was in such sharp contrast to the loving, intimate way she addressed her mother, that he felt the intended reproach of it, even while it amused and surprised him. But it hurt a little. It wasn't pleasant to have his only child regard him as a stranger. It was fortunate that the next letter was the one in which she hastened to call him "a Saint-George-and-the-dragon sort of father."

When he read Barbara's explanation of his long silence and Georgina's quick acceptance of it, he wanted to take them both in his arms and tell them how deeply he was touched by their love and loyalty; that he hadn't intended to be neglectful of them or so absorbed in his work that he put it first in his life. But it was hard for him to put such things into words, either written or spoken. He had left too much to

be taken for granted he admitted remorsefully to himself.

For a long time he sat staring sternly into space. So people had been gossiping about him, had they? And Barbara and the baby had heard the whispers and been hurt by them—— He'd go home and put a stop to it. He straightened himself up and turned to report his sudden decision to Dave. But the chair by the window was empty. The Doctor glanced over his shoulder. Dave had changed his seat and was sitting behind him. They were back to back, but a mirror hung in such a way the Doctor could see Dave's face.

With arms crossed on a little table in front of him, he was leaning forward for another look at the photograph which he had propped up against a vase. A hungry yearning was in his face as he bent towards it, gazing into it as if he could not look his fill. Suddenly his head went down on his crossed arms in such a hopeless fashion that in a flash Doctor Huntingdon divined the reason, and recognized the resemblance that had haunted him. Now he understood why the boy had stayed behind to nurse him. Now a dozen trifling incidents that had seemed of no importance to him at the time, confirmed his suspicion.

His first impulse was to cry out *"Dan!"* but his life-long habit of repression checked him. He felt he had no right to intrude on the privacy which the

boy guarded so jealously. But Uncle Darcy's son! Off here in a foreign land, bowed down with remorse and homesickness! How he must have been tortured with all that talk of the old town and its people!

A great wave of pity and yearning tenderness swept through the Doctor's heart as he sat twisted around in his chair, staring at that reflection in the mirror. He was uncertain what he ought to do. He longed to go to him with some word of comfort, but he shrank from the thought of saying anything which would seem an intrusion.

Finally he rose, and walking across the room, laid his hand on the bowed shoulder with a sympathetic pressure.

"Look here, my boy," he said, in his deep, quiet voice. "I'm not asking you what the trouble is, but whatever it is you'll let me help you, won't you? You've given me the right to ask that by all you've done for me. Anything I could do would be only too little for one who has stood by me the way you have. I want you to feel that I'm your friend in the deepest meaning of that word. You can count on me for anything." Then in a lighter tone as he gave the shoulder a half-playful slap he added, "I'm *for* you, son."

The younger man raised his head and straightened himself up in his chair.

"You wouldn't be!" he exclaimed, "if you knew

who I am." Then he blurted out the confession: "I'm Dan Darcy. I can't let you go on believing in me when you talk like that."

"But I knew it when I said what I did," interrupted Doctor Huntingdon. "It flashed over me first when I saw you looking at your father's picture. No man could look at a stranger's face that way. Then I knew what the resemblance was that has puzzled me ever since I met you. The only wonder to me is that I did not see it long ago."

"You knew it," repeated Dan slowly, "and yet you told me to count you as a friend in the deepest meaning of that word. How could you mean it?"

The Doctor's answer came with deep impressiveness.

"Because, despite whatever slip you may have made as a boy of eighteen, you have grown into a man worthy of such a friendship. A surgeon in my position learns to read character, learns to know an honest man when he sees one. No matter what lies behind you that you regret, I have every confidence in you now, Dan. I am convinced you are worthy to be the son of even such a man as Daniel Darcy."

He held out his hand to have it taken in a long, silent grip that made it ache.

"Come on and go back home with me," urged the Doctor. "You've made good out here. Do the brave thing now and go back and live down the past. It'll make the old folks so happy it'll wipe out the

heart-break of all those years that you've been away."

Dan's only response was another grasp of the Doctor's hand as strong and as painful as the first. Pulling himself up by it he stood an instant trying to say something, then, too overcome to utter a word, made a dash for the door.

Doctor Huntingdon was so stirred by the scene that he found it difficult to go back to his letters, but the very next one in order happened to be the one Georgina wrote to her mother just after Belle had given her consent to Barby's being told of Emmett's confession. He read the latter part of it, standing, for he had sprung to his feet with the surprise of its opening sentence. He did not even know that Emmett had been dead all these years, and Dan, who had had no word from home during all his absence, could not know it either. He was in a tremor of eagerness to hurry to him with the news, but he waited to scan the rest of the letter.

Then with it fluttering open in his hand he strode across the hall and burst into Dan's room without knocking.

"Pack up your junk, this minute, boy," he shouted. "We take the first boat out of here for home. Look at this!"

He thrust Georgina's letter before Dan's bewildered eyes.

CHAPTER XXIX

WHILE THEY WAITED

"THERE comes the boy from the telegraph office." Mrs. Triplett spoke with such a raven-like note of foreboding in her voice that Georgina, practising her daily scales, let her hands fall limply from the keys.

"The Tishbite!" she thought uneasily. What evil was it about to send into the house now, under cover of that yellow envelope? Would it take Barby away from her as it had done before?

Sitting motionless on the piano stool, she waited in dread while Mrs. Triplett hurried to the door before the boy could ring, signed for the message and silently bore it upstairs. The very fact that she went up with it herself, instead of calling to Barby that a message had come, gave Georgina the impression that it contained bad news.

"A *cablegram* for me?" she heard Barby ask. Then there was a moment's silence in which she knew the message was being opened and read. Then there was a murmur as if she were reading it aloud to Tippy and then—an excited whirlwind of a Barby flying down the stairs, her eyes like happy stars, her

arms outstretched to gather Georgina into them, and her voice half laugh, half sob, singing:

"Oh, he's coming home to me
Baby mine!"

Never before had Georgina seen her so radiant, so excited, so overflowingly happy that she gave vent to her feelings as a little schoolgirl might have done. Seizing Georgina in her arms she waltzed her around the room until she was dizzy. Coming to a pause at the piano stool she seated herself and played, "The Year of Jubilee Has Come," in deep, crashing chords and trickly little runs and trills, till the old tune was transformed into a paen of jubilation.

Then she took the message from her belt, where she had tucked it and re-read it to assure herself of its reality.

"Starting home immediately. Stay three months, dragon captured."

"That must mean that his quest has been fairly successful," she said. "If he's found the cause of the disease it'll be only a matter of time till he finds how to kill it."

Then she looked up, puzzled.

"How strange for him to call it the *dragon*. How could he know we'd understand, and that we've been calling it that?"

Georgina's time had come for confession.

"Oh, I wrote him a little note after you told me the story and told him I was proud of having a Saint-George-kind of a father, and that we hoped every day he'd get the microbe."

"You darling!" exclaimed Barbara, drawing her to her for another impulsive hug. She did not ask as Georgina was afraid she would:

"Why didn't you tell me you were writing to your father?" Barbara understood, without asking, remembering the head bowed in her lap after that confession of her encounter with the prying stranger in the bakery.

Suddenly Georgina asked:

"Barby, what is the 'Tishbite?' "

"The what?" echoed Barby, wrinkling her forehead in perplexity.

"The *Tishbite*. Don't you know it says in the Bible, Elijah and the Tishbite——"

"Oh, no, dear, you've turned it around, and put the and in the wrong place. It is '*And* Elijah the Tishbite,' just as we'd say William the Norman or Manuel the Portuguese."

"Well, for pity sakes!" drawled Georgina in a long, slow breath of relief. "Is *that* all? I wish I'd known it long ago. It would have saved me a lot of scary feelings."

Then she told how she had made the wish on the star and tried to prove it as Belle had taught her, by opening the Bible at random.

"If you had read on," said Barby, "you'd have found what it meant your own self."

"But the book shut up before I had a chance," explained Georgina. "And I never could find the place again, although I've hunted and hunted. And I was sure it meant some sort of devil, and that it would come and punish me for using the Bible that way as if it were a hoodoo."

"Then why didn't you ask me?" insisted Barby. "There's another time you see, when a big worry and misunderstanding could have been cleared away with a word. To think of your living in dread all that time, when the Tishbite was only a good old prophet whose presence brought a blessing to the house which sheltered him."

That night when Georgina's curls were being brushed she said, "Barby, I know now who my Tishbite is; it's Captain Kidd. He's brought a blessing ever since he came to this town. If it hadn't been for his barking that day we were playing in the garage I wouldn't be here now to tell the tale. If it hadn't been for him I wouldn't have known Richard, and we'd never have started to playing pirate. And if we hadn't played pirate Richard wouldn't have asked to borrow the rifle, and if he hadn't asked we never would have found the note hidden in the stock, and if we hadn't found the note nobody would have known that Danny was innocent. Then if Captain Kidd hadn't found the pouch

we wouldn't have seen the compass that led to finding the wild-cat woman who told us that Danny was alive and well."

"What a House-That-Jack-Built sort of tale that was!" exclaimed Barby, much amused. "We'll have to do something in Captain Kidd's honor. Give him a party perhaps, and light up the holiday tree."

The usual bedtime ceremonies were over, and Barby had turned out the light and reached the door when Georgina raised herself on her elbow to call:

"Barby, I've just thought of it. The wish I made on that star that night is beginning to come true. Nearly everybody I know is happy about something." Then she snuggled her head down on the pillow with a little wriggle of satisfaction. "Ugh! this is such a good world. I'm so glad I'm living in it. Aren't you?"

And Barby had to come all the way back in the dark to emphasize her heartfelt "yes, indeed," with a hug, and to seal the restless eyelids down with a kiss—the only way to make them stay shut.

Richard came back the next day. He brought a picture to Georgina from Mr. Locke. It was the copy of the illustration he had promised her, the fairy shallop with its sails set wide, coming across a sea of Dreams, and at the prow, white-handed Hope, the angel girt with golden wings, which swept back over the sides of the vessel.

"Think of having a painting by the famous Mil-

ford Norris Locke!" exclaimed Barby. She hung over it admiringly. "Most people would be happy to have just his autograph." She bent nearer to examine the name in the corner of the picture. "What's this underneath? Looks like number IV."

"Oh, that means he's number four in our Rainbow Club. Peggy Burrell is number five and the Captain is number six. That's all the members we have so far."

"Aren't you going to count me in?" asked Barby.

"Oh, you *are* counted in. You've belonged from the beginning. We made you an *honary* member or whatever it is they call it, people who deserve to belong because they're always doing nice things, but don't know it. There's you and Uncle Darcy and Captain Kidd, because he saved our lives and saved our families from having to have a double funeral."

Barby stooped to take the little terrier's head between her hands and pat-a-cake it back and forth with an affectionate caress.

"Captain Kidd," she said gaily, "you shall have a party this very night, and there shall be bones and cakes on the holiday tree, and you shall be the best man with a 'normous blue bow on your collar, and we'll all dance around in your honor this way."

Springing to her feet and holding the terrier's front paws, she waltzed him around and around on his hind legs, singing:

"All around the barberry bush,
Barberry bush, barberry bush.
All around the barberry bush
So early in the morning."

Georgina, accustomed all her life to such frisky performances, took it as a matter of course that Barby should give vent to her feelings in the same way that she herself would have done, but Richard stood by, bewildered. It was a revelation to him that anybody's mother could be so charmingly and unreservedly gay. She seemed more like a big sister than any of the mothers of his acquaintance. He couldn't remember his own, and while Aunt Letty was always sweet and good to him he couldn't imagine her waltzing a dog around on its hind legs any more than he could imagine Mrs. Martha Washington doing it.

The holiday tree was another revelation to him, when he came back at dusk to find it lighted with the colored lanterns and blooming with flags and hung with surprises for Georgina and himself.

"You've never seen it lighted," Barby explained, "and Georgina's birthday had to be skipped because I wasn't here to celebrate, so we've rolled all the holidays into one, for a grand celebration in Captain Kidd's honor."

It was to shorten the time of waiting that Barbara threw herself into the children's games and pleasures

so heartily. Every night she tore a leaf off the calendar and planned something to fill up the next day to the brim with work or play. They climbed to the top of the monument when she found that Richard had never made the ascent, and stood long, looking off to Plymouth, twenty miles away, and at the town spread out below them, seeming from their great height, a tiny toy village. They went to Truro to see the bayberry candle-dipping. They played Maud Muller, raking the yard, because the boy whom old Jeremy had installed in his place had hurt his foot. Old Jeremy, being well on toward ninety now, no longer attempted any work, though still hale and hearty. But the garden had been his especial domain too long for him to give it up entirely, and he spent hours in it daily, to the disgust of his easy-going successor.

There were picnics at Highland Light and the Race Point life-saving station. There were long walks out the state road, through the dunes and by the cranberry bogs. But everything which speeded Barbara's weeks of feverish waiting, hurrying her on nearer her heart's desire, brought Richard nearer to the time of parting from the old seaport town and the best times he had ever known. He had kodak pictures of all their outings. Most of them were light-struck or out of focus or over-exposed, but he treasured them because he had taken them himself with his first little Brownie camera. There

was nothing wrong or queer with the recollection of the scenes they brought to him. His memory photographed only perfect days, and he dreaded to have them end.

Before those weeks were over Richard began to feel that he belonged to Barby in a way, and she to him. There were many little scenes of which no snapshot could be taken, which left indelible impressions.

For instance, those evenings in the dim room lighted only by the moonlight streaming in through the open windows, when Barby sat at the piano with Georgina beside her, singing, while he looked out over the sea and felt the soul of him stir vaguely, as if he had wings somewhere, waiting to be unfurled.

The last Sunday of his vacation he went to church with Barbara and Georgina. It wasn't the Church of the Pilgrims, but another white-towered one near by. The president of the bank was one of the ushers. He called Richard by name when he shook hands with the three of them at the door. That in itself gave Richard a sense of importance and of being welcome. It was a plain old-fashioned church, its only decoration a big bowl of tiger-lilies on a table down in front of the pulpit. When he took his seat in one of the high front pews he felt that he had never been in such a quiet, peaceful place before.

They were very early. The windows were open, and now and then a breeze blowing in from the sea

fluttered the leaves of a hymn-book lying open on the front seat. Each time they fluttered he heard another sound also, as faint and sweet as if it were the ringing of little crystal bells. Georgina, on the other side of Barby, heard it too, and they looked at each other questioningly. Then Richard discovered where the tinkle came from, and pointed upward to call her attention to it. There, from the center of the ceiling swung a great, old-fashioned chandelier, hung with a circle of pendant prisms, each one as large and shining as the one Uncle Darcy had given her.

Georgina knew better than to whisper in such a place, but she couldn't help leaning past Barby so that Richard could see her lips silently form the words, "Rainbow Club." She wondered if Mr. Gates had started it. There were enough prisms for nearly every member in the church to claim one.

Barby, reading the silent message of her lips and guessing that Georgina was wondering over the discovery, moved her own lips to form the words, "just *honorary* members."

Georgina nodded her satisfaction. It was good to know that there were so many of them in the world, all working for the same end, whether they realized it or not.

Just before the service began an old lady in the adjoining pew next to Richard, reached over the partition and offered him several cloves. He was too

astonished to refuse them and showed them to Barby, not knowing what to do with them. She leaned down and whispered behind her fan:

"She eats them to keep her awake in church."

Richard had no intention of going to sleep, but he chewed one up, finding it so hot it almost strangled him. Every seat was filled in a short time, and presently a drowsiness crept into the heated air which began to weave some kind of a spell around him. His shoes were new and his collar chafed his neck. His eyelids grew heavier and heavier. He stared at the lilies till the whole front of the church seemed filled with them. He looked up at the chandelier and began to count the prisms, and watch for the times that the breeze swept across them and set them to tinkling.

Then, the next thing that he knew he was waking from a long doze on Barby's shoulder. She was fanning him with slow sweeps of her white-feathered fan which smelled deliciously of some faint perfume, and the man from Boston was singing all alone, something about still waves and being brought into a haven.

A sense of Sabbath peace and stillness enfolded him, with the beauty of the music and the lilies, the tinkling prisms, the faint, warm perfume wafted across his face by Barby's fan. The memory of it all stayed with him as something very sacred and sweet, he could not tell why, unless it was that Bar-

by's shoulder was such a dear place for a little motherless lad's head to lie.

Georgina, leaning against Barby on the other side, half asleep, sat up and straightened her hat when the anthem began. Being a Huntingdon she could not turn as some people did and stare up at the choir loft behind her when that wonderful voice sang alone. She looked up at the prisms instead, and as she looked it seemed to her that the voice was the voice of the white angel Hope, standing at the prow of a boat, its golden wings sweeping back, as storm-tossed but triumphant, it brought the vessel in at last to happy anchorage.

The words which the voice sang were the words on which the rainbow had rested, that day she read them to Aunt Elspeth: *"So He bringeth them into their desired haven."* They had seemed like music then, but now, rolling upward, as if Hope herself were singing them at the prow of Life's tossing shallop, they were more than music. They voiced the joy of great desire finding great fulfilment.

CHAPTER XXX

NEARING THE END

"OLD Mr. Potter has had a stroke."

Georgina called the news up to Richard as she paused at the foot of the Green Stairs on her way to the net-mender's house.

"Belle sent a note over a little while ago and I'm taking the answer back. Come and go with me."

Richard, who had been trundling Captain Kidd around on his forefeet in the role of wheelbarrow, dropped the dog's hind legs which he had been using as handles and came jumping down the steps, two at a time to do her bidding.

"Belle's gone over to take care of things," Georgina explained, with an important air as they walked along. "There's a man to help nurse him, but she'll stay on to the end." Her tone and words were Tippy's own as she made this announcement.

"End of what?" asked Richard. "And what's a stroke?"

Half an hour earlier Georgina could not have answered his question, but she explained now with the air of one who has had a lifetime of experience. It was Mrs. Triplett's fund she was drawing on, however, and old Jeremy's. Belle's note had started them to comparing reminiscences, and out of their

conversation Georgina had gathered many gruesome facts.

"You may be going about as well and hearty as usual, and suddenly it'll strike you to earth like lightning, and it may leave you powerless to move for weeks and sometimes even years. You may know all that's going on around you but not be able to speak or make a sign. Mr. Potter isn't as bad as that, but he's speechless. With him the end may come any time, yet he may linger on for nobody knows how long."

Richard had often passed the net-mender's cottage in the machine, and stared in at the old man plying his twine-shuttle in front of the door. The fact that he was Emmett's father and ignorant of the secret which Richard shared, made an object of intense interest out of an otherwise unattractive and commonplace old man. Now that interest grew vast and overshadowing as the children approached the house.

Belle, stepping to the front door when she heard the gate click, motioned for them to go around to the back. As they passed an open side window, each looked in, involuntarily attracted by the sight of a bed drawn up close to it. Then they glanced at each other, startled and awed by what they saw, and bumped into each other in their haste to get by as quickly as possible.

On the bed lay a rigid form, stretched out under

a white counterpane. All that showed of the face above the bushy whiskers was as waxen looking as if death had already touched it, but the sunken eyes half open, showed that they were still in the mysterious hold of what old Jeremy called a "living death." It was a sight which neither of them could put out of their minds for days afterward.

Belle met them at the back door, solemn, unsmiling, her hushed tones adding to the air of mystery which seemed to shroud the house. As she finished reading the note a neighbor came in the back way and Belle asked the children to wait a few minutes. They dropped down on the grass while Belle, leaning against the pump, answered Mrs. Brown's questions in low tones.

She had been up all night, she told Mrs. Brown. Yes, she was going to stay on till the call came, no matter whether it was a week or a year. Mrs. Brown spoke in a hoarse whisper which broke now and then, letting her natural voice through with startling effect.

"It's certainly noble of you," she declared. "There's not many who would put themselves out to do for an old person who hadn't any claim on them the way you are doing for him. There'll surely be stars in *your* crown."

Later, as the children trudged back home, sobered by all they had seen and heard, Georgina broke the silence.

"Well, I think we ought to put Belle's name on the very top line of our club book. She ought to be an honary member—the very honaryest one of all."

"Why?" asked Richard.

"You heard all Mrs. Brown said. Seems to me what she's doing to give old Mr. Potter a good time is the very noblest——"

There was an amazed look on Richard's face as he interrupted with the exclamation:

"Gee-minee! You don't call what that old man's having a good time, do you?"

"Well, it's good to what it would be if Belle wasn't taking care of him. And if she does as Mrs. Brown says, 'carries some comfort into the valley of the shadow for him, making his last days bright,' isn't that the very biggest rainbow anybody could make?"

"Ye-es," admitted Richard in a doubtful tone. "Maybe it is if you put it that way."

They walked a few blocks more in silence, then he said:

"I think *Dan* ought to be an honary member."

It was Georgina's turn to ask why.

"Aw, you know why! Taking the blame on himself the way he did and everything."

"But he made just as bad times for Uncle Darcy and Aunt Elspeth as he made good times for Mr. Potter and Emmett. I don't think he has any right to belong at all."

They argued the question hotly for a few min-

utes, coming nearer to a quarrel than they had ever been before, and only dropping it as they crossed to a side street which led into the dunes.

"Let's turn here and go home this way," suggested Richard. "Let's go look at the place where we buried the pouch and see if the sand has shifted any."

Nothing was changed, however, except that the holes they had dug were filled to the level now, and the sand stretched an unbroken surface as before the day of their digging.

"Cousin James says that if ever the gold comes to the top we can have it, because he paid the woman. But if it ever does I won't be here to see it. I've got to go home in eight more days."

He stood kicking his toes into the sand as he added dolefully, "Here it is the end of the summer and we've only played at being pirates. We've never gone after the real stuff in dead earnest, one single time."

"I know," admitted Georgina. "First we had to wait so long for your portrait to be finished and then you went off on the yacht, and all in between times things have happened so fast there never was any time. But we found something just as good as pirate stuff—that note in the rifle was worth more to Uncle Darcy than a chest of gold."

"And Captain Kidd was as good as a real pirate," said Richard, brightening at the thought, "for he

brought home a bag of real gold, and was the one who started us after the wild-cat woman. I guess Uncle Darcy would rather know what she told him than have a chest of ducats and pearls."

"We can go next summer," suggested Georgina.

"Maybe I won't be here next summer. Dad always wants to try new places on his vacation. He and Aunt Letty like to move. But I'd like to stay here always. I hate to go away until I find out the end of things. I wish I could stay until the letter is found and Dan comes home."

"You may be a grown-up man before either of those things happen," remarked Georgina sagely.

"Then I'll know I'll be here to see 'm," was the triumphant answer, "because when I'm a man I'm coming back here to live all the rest of my life. It's the nicest place there is."

"If anything happens sooner I'll write and tell you," promised Georgina.

Something happened the very next morning, however, and Georgina kept part of her promise though not in writing, when she came running up the Green Stairs, excited and eager. Her news was so tremendously important that the words tumbled over each other in her haste to tell it. She could hardly make herself understood. The gist of it was that a long night letter had just arrived from her father, saying that he had landed in San Francisco and was taking the first homeward bound train. He would

stop in Washington for a couple of days to attend to some business, and then was coming home for a long visit. And—this was the sentence Georgina saved till last to electrify Richard with:

"Am bringing Dan with me."

"He didn't say where he found him or anything else about it," added Georgina, only 'prepare his family for the surprise.' So Barby went straight down there to Fishburn Court and she's telling Aunt Elspeth and Uncle Darcy now, so they'll have time to get used to the news before he walks in on them."

They sat down on the top step with the dog between them.

"They must know it by this time," remarked Georgina. "Oh, don't you wish you could see what's happening, and how glad everybody is? Uncle Darcy will want to start right out with his bell and ring it till it cracks, telling the whole town."

"But he won't do it," said Richard. "He promised he wouldn't."

"Anyhow till Belle says he can," amended Georgina. "I'm sure she'll say so when 'the call' comes, but nobody knows when that will be. It may be soon and it may not be for years."

They sat there on the steps a long time, talking quietly, but with the holiday feeling that one has when waiting for a procession to pass by. The very air seemed full of that sense of expectancy, of waiting for something to happen.

CHAPTER XXXI

COMINGS AND GOINGS

OUT towards the cranberry bogs went the Towncrier. No halting step this time, no weary droop of shoulders. It would have taken a swift-footed boy to keep pace with him on this errand. He was carrying the news to Belle. What he expected her to say he did not stop to ask himself, nor did he notice in the tumultuous joy which kept his old heart pounding at unwonted speed, that she turned white with the suddenness of his telling, and then a wave of color surged over her face.

Her only answer was to lead him into the room where the old net-mender lay helpless, turning appealing eyes to her as she entered, with the look in them that one sees in the eyes of a grateful dumb animal. His gaze did not reach as far as the Towncrier, who halted on the threshold until Belle joined him there. She led him outside.

"You see for yourself how it is," was all she said. "Do as you think best about it."

Out on the road again the Towncrier stood hesitating, uncertain which course to take. Twice he started in the direction of home, then retraced his

steps again to stand considering. Finally he straightened up with a determined air and started briskly down the road which led to the center of the town. Straight to the bank he went, asking for Mr. Gates, and a moment later was admitted into the president's private office.

"And what can I do for you, Uncle Dan'l?" was the cordial greeting.

The old man dropped heavily into the chair set out for him. He was out of breath from his rapid going.

"You can do me one of the biggest favors I ever asked of anybody if you only will. Do you remember a sealed envelope I brought in here the first of the summer and asked you to keep for me till I called for it?"

"Yes, do you want it now?"

"I'm going to show you what's in it."

He had such an air of suppressed excitement as he said it and his breathing was so labored, that Mr. Gates wondered what could have happened to affect him so. When he came back from the vault he carried the envelope which had been left in his charge earlier in the summer. Uncle Darcy tore it open with fingers that trembled in their eagerness.

"What I'm about to show you is for your eyes alone," he said. He took out a crumpled sheet of paper which had once been torn in two and pasted together again in clumsy fashion. It was the paper

which had been wadded up in the rifle, which Belle had seized with hysterical fury, torn in two and flung from her.

"There! Read that!" he commanded.

Mr. Gates knew everybody in town. He had been one of the leading citizens who had subscribed to the monument in Emmett Potter's honor. He could scarcely believe the evidence of his own eyes as he read the confession thrust into his hands, and he had never been more surprised at any tale ever told him than the one Uncle Darcy related now of the way it had been found, and his promise to Belle Triplett.

"I'm not going to make it public while old Potter hangs on," he said in conclusion. "I'll wait till he's past feeling the hurts of earth. But Mr. Gates, I've had word that my Danny's coming home. I can't let the boy come back to dark looks and cold shoulders turned on him everywhere. I thought if you'd just start the word around that he's all right—that somebody else confessed to what he's accused of—that you'd seen the proof with your own eyes and could vouch for his being all right—if *you'd* just give him a welcoming hand and show you believed in him it would make all the difference in the world in Danny's home-coming. You needn't mention any names," he pleaded. "I know it'll make a lot of talk and surmising, but that won't hurt anybody. If you could just do that——"

When the old man walked out of the president's office he carried his head as high as if he had been given a kingdom. He had been given what was worth more to him, the hearty handclasp of a man whose "word was as good as a bond," and the promise that Dan should be welcomed back to the town by great and small, as far as was in his power to make that welcome cordial and widespread.

* * * * * *

Dan did not wait in Washington while Doctor Huntingdon made his report. He came on alone, and having missed the boat, took the railroad journey down the Cape. In the early September twilight he stepped off the car, feeling as if he were in a strange dream. But when he turned into one of the back streets leading to his home, it was all so familiar and unchanged that he had the stranger feeling of never having been away. It was the past ten years that seemed a dream.

He had not realized how he loved the old town or the depth of his longing for it, until he saw it now, restored to him. Even the familiar, savory smells floating out from various supper tables as he passed along, gave him keen enjoyment. Some of them had been unknown all the time of his wanderings in foreign lands. The voices, the type of features, the dress of the people he passed, the veriest trifles which he never noticed when he lived among

them, thrilled him now with a sense of having come back to his own.

Half a dozen fishermen passed him, their boots clumping heavily. He recognized two of them if not as individuals, as members of families he had known, from their resemblance to the older ones. Then he turned his head aside as he reached the last man. He was not ready to be recognized himself, yet. He wanted to go home first, and this man at the end was Peter Winn. He had sailed in his boat many a time.

A cold fog was settling over the Court when he turned into it. As silently as the fog itself he stole through the sand and in at the gate. The front door was shut and the yellow blind pulled down over the window, but the lamp behind it sent out a glow, reaching dimly through the fog. He crept up close to it to listen for the sound of voices, and suddenly two blended shadows were thrown on the blind. The old man was helping his wife up from her rocking chair and supporting her with a careful arm as he guided her across to the table. His voice rang out cheerfully to the waiting listener.

"That's it, Mother! That's it! Just one more step now. Why, you're doing fine! I knew the word of Danny's coming home would put you on your feet again. The lad'll be here soon, thank God! Maybe before another nightfall."

A moment later and the lamp-light threw another

shadow on the yellow blind, plain as a photograph. It was well that the fog drew a white veil between it and the street, for it was a picture of joy too sacred for curious eyes to see.

Danny had come home!

* * * * * *

It was the tenth of September. The town looked strangely deserted with nearly all the summer people gone. The railroad wharf was the only place where there was the usual bustle and crowd, and that was because the *Dorothy Bradford* was gathering up its passengers for the last trip of the season.

Richard was to be one of them, and a most unwilling one. Not that he was sorry to be going back to school. He had missed Binney and the gang, and could hardly wait to begin swapping experiences with them. But he was leaving Captain Kidd behind. Dogs were not allowed in the apartment house to which his father and Aunt Letty intended moving the next week.

There had been a sorry morning in the garage when the news was broken to him. He crept up into the machine and lay down on the back seat, and cried and cried with his arms around Captain Kidd's neck. The faithful little tongue reached out now and then to lap away his master's tears, and once he lifted his paw and clawed at the little striped shirt waist as if trying to convey some mute comfort.

"You're just the same as folks!" sobbed Richard,

hugging the shaggy head, laid lovingly on his breast. "And it's *cruel* of 'em to make me give you away."

Several days had passed since that unhappy morning, however, and Richard did not feel quite so desolate over the separation now. For one thing it had not been necessary to give up all claim on Captain Kidd to insure him a good home. Georgina had gladly accepted the offer of half of him, and had coaxed even Tippy into according him a reluctant welcome.

The passengers already on deck watched with interest the group near the gang-plank. Richard was putting the clever little terrier through his whole list of tricks.

"It's the last time, old fellow," he said imploringly when the dog hesitated over one of them. "Go on and do it for me this once. Maybe I'll never see you again till I'm grown up and you're too old to remember me."

"That's what you said about Dan's coming home," remarked Georgina from under the shade of her pink parasol. That parasol and the pink dress and the rose-like glow on the happy little face was attracting even more admiration from the passengers than Captain Kidd's tricks. Barbara, standing beside her, cool and dainty in a white dress and pale green sweater and green parasol, made almost as much of a picture.

"You talked that way about never expecting to

see Danny till you were grown," continued Georgina, "and it turned out that you not only saw him, but were with him long enough to hear some of his adventures. It would be the same way about your coming back here if you'd just keep hoping hard enough."

"Come Dicky," called Mr. Moreland from the upper deck. "They're about to take in the gangplank. Don't get left."

Maybe it was just as well that there was no time for good-byes. Maybe it was more than the little fellow could have managed manfully. As it was his voice sounded suspiciously near breaking as he called back over his shoulder, almost gruffly:

"Well you—you be as good to my half of him as you are to yours."

A moment or two later, leaning over the railing of the upper deck he could see Captain Kidd struggling and whining to follow him. But Barby held tightly to the chain fastened to his collar, and Georgina, her precious pink parasol cast aside, knelt on the wharf beside the quivering, eager little body to clasp her arms about it and pour out a flood of comforting endearments.

Wider and wider grew the stretch of water between the boat and the wharf. Richard kept on waving until he could no longer distinguish the little group on the end of the pier. But he knew they would be there until the last curl of smoke from the steamer disappeared around Long Point.

"Here," said the friendly voice of a woman standing next to him. She had been one of the interested witnesses of the parting. She thrust an opera-glass into his hands. For one more long satisfying moment he had another glimpse of the little group, still faithfully waving, still watching. How very, very far away they were!

Suddenly the glass grew so blurry and queer it was no more good, and he handed it back to the woman. At that moment he would have given all the pirate gold that was ever on land or sea, were it his to give, to be back on that pier with the three of them, able to claim that old seaport town as his home for ever and always. And then the one thing that it had taught him came to his help. With his head up, he looked back to the distant shore where the Pilgrim monument reared itself like a watchful giant, and said hopefully, under his breath:

"Well, *some day!*"

* * * * * *

Georgina, waking earlier than usual that September morning, looked up and read the verse on the calendar opposite her bed, which she had read every morning since the month came in.

"Like ships my days sail swift to port,
I know not if this be
The one to bear a cargo rare
Of happiness to me.

"But I *do* know this time," she thought exultingly, sitting up in bed to look out the window and see what kind of weather the dawn had brought. This was the day her father was coming home. He was coming from Boston on a battleship, and she and Barby were going out to meet him as soon as it was sighted in the harbor.

She had that quivery, excited feeling which sometimes seizes travelers as they near the journey's end, as if she herself were a little ship, putting into a long-wished-for port. Well, it would be like that in a way, she thought, to have her father's arms folded around her, to come at last into the strange, sweet intimacy she had longed for ever since she first saw Peggy Burrell and the Captain.

And it was reaching another long-desired port to have Barby's happiness so complete. As for Uncle Darcy he said himself that he couldn't be gladder walking the shining streets of heaven, than he was going along that old board-walk with Danny beside him, and everybody so friendly and so pleased to see him.

Georgina still called him Danny in her thoughts, but it had been somewhat a shock the first time she saw him, to find that he was a grown man with a grave, mature face, instead of the boy which Uncle Darcy's way of speaking of him had led her to expect. He had already been up to the house to tell them the many things they were eager to know about

the months he had spent with Doctor Huntingdon and their long trip home together. And listening, Georgina realized how very deep was the respect and admiration of this younger man for her father and his work, and everything he said made her more eager to see and know him.

Uncle Darcy and Dan were with them when they put out in the motor boat to meet the battleship. It was almost sunset when they started, and the man at the wheel drove so fast they felt the keen whip of the wind as they cut through the waves. They were glad to button their coats, even up to their chins. Uncle Darcy and Dan talked all the way over, but Georgina sat with her hand tightly locked in her mother's, sharing her tense expectancy, never saying a word.

Then at last the little boat stopped alongside the big one. There were a few moments of delay before Georgina looked up and saw her father coming down to them. He was just as his photograph had pictured him, tall, erect, commanding, and strangely enough her first view of him was with his face turned to one side. Then it was hidden from her as he gathered Barby into his arms and held her close.

Georgina, watching that meeting with wistful, anxious eyes, felt her last little doubt of him vanish, and when he turned to her with his stern lips curved into the smile she had hoped for, and with outstretched arms, she sprang into them and threw her

arms around his neck with such a welcoming clasp that his eyes filled with tears.

Then, remembering certain little letters which he had re-read many times on his homeward voyage, he held her off to look into her eyes and whisper with a tender smile which made the teasing question a joy to her:

"Which is it now? 'Dear Sir' or 'Dad-o'-my heart?' "

The impetuous pressure of her soft little cheek against his face was answer eloquent enough.

As they neared the shore a bell tolled out over the water. It was the bell of Saint Peter, patron saint of the fisher-folk and all those who dwell by the sea. Then Long Point lighthouse flashed a welcome, and the red lamp of Wood End blinked in answer. On the other side Highland Light sent its great, unfailing glare out over the Atlantic, and the old Towncrier, looking up, saw the first stars shining overhead.

Alongshore the home lights began to burn. One shone out in Fishburn Court where Aunt Elspeth sat waiting. One threw its gleam over the edge of the cranberry bog from the window where Belle kept faithful vigil—where she would continue to keep it until "the call" came to release the watcher as well as the stricken old soul whose peace she guarded. And up in the big gray house by the breakwater, where Tippy was keeping supper hot, a supper

fit to set before a king, lights blazed from every window.

Pondering on what all these lights stood for, the old man moved away from the others, and took his place near the prow. His heart was too full just now to talk as they were doing. Presently he felt a touch on his arm. Georgina had laid her hand on it with the understanding touch of perfect comradeship. They were his own words she was repeating to him, but they bore the added weight of her own experience now.

"It *pays* to keep Hope at the prow, Uncle Darcy."

"Aye, lass," he answered tremulously, "it does."

"And we're coming into port with all flags flying!"

"*That* we are!"

She stood in silent gladness after that, the rest of the way, her curls flying back in the wind made by the swift motion of the boat, the white spray dashing up till she could taste the salt of it on her lips; a little figure of Hope herself, but of Hope riding triumphantly into the port of its fulfillment. It was for them all—those words of the old psalm on which the rainbow had rested, and which the angel voice had sung—"*Into their desired haven.*"

THE END